WHOSE CITY? INTERSECTIONS OF GENDER, CLASS, AND (IL)LEGITIMATE
BELONGING IN DELHI'S JHUGGI JHOPRIS

By

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ABSTRACT

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In the constantly transforming space of India's capital, belonging and rights to the city are
continually contested at intersections of class and gender. Following India's economic
"liberalization" in the early 1990s, there has been a growing push among the country's business
and elite classes to transform big cities such as Delhi and Mumbai into "global cities," complete
with high-rise buildings, multiplexes, and massive highways. This trend has reinvigorated already
embedded popular discourses and government policies that characterize the makeshift and
unauthorized housing structures of the urban poor as problems to be solved, primarily through
their demolition and the removal of their residents to peripheries of the city. This is in stark contrast
to many lavish elite neighborhoods, also built illegally and utilizing public resources, which do
not face similar concerns of demolition and removal. Instead, spatial precariousness remains
largely a dilemma of the poor.

Simultaneously, scholars have noted that the "outside" or "public" of Indian cities remain
spaces to be consumed and enjoyed by distinctly masculine bodies (Hansen 2001; Lukose 2009).
In contrast, women in urban public spaces must often move in primarily circumscribed ways.
What's more, Delhi has had a growing reputation as a city that is particularly unsafe for women
and is popularly referred to as India's "rape capital." Indeed, following a widely publicized gang
rape in 2012, there has been an increasing emphasis placed on women's safety, and more generally

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[1] *Jhuggi jhopri* is the term used for slums in Delhi. While the term is in Hindi, it should be noted that not all Hindi
speaking localities of India use this term, but instead have other distinct terms for slums such as 'zopadpatti' in
Mumbai and 'kacchi basti' in Jaipur.

on "women's empowerment," by city residents, social activists, and politicians alike. Yet, public discourses of women's empowerment tend to rely heavily on narratives and experiences of middle-class women, failing to address the experiences and ongoing struggles of poor women living in slums. Meanwhile, slum resident women must constantly negotiate their rights to both public and private spaces of the city as they balance movement between the instability of their "illegal" homes and the "masculine" public spaces. This dissertation aims to examine the intersectional marginalization (Crenshaw 1991) of poor women in Delhi as they navigate an urban space that is hostile to *both* female and impoverished persons but seldom provides modes of organized resistance that holistically or effectively incorporate both of these identities.

For our mothers, grandmothers, and sisters whose stories are too often silenced in favor of the stories of men. For Ade'Abai and Aba'Hagoi, and all those whose families have been ripped apart by war, politics, and arbitrary borders. Finally, for all those who continue to struggle and fight for social justice despite the seeming futility of their efforts.

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to acknowledge all of my family members through the generations who have stood up and fought against tyranny and injustice, especially my aunt Asghedet Mehreteab who left home at the age of nineteen to join a struggle for liberation. Their bravery and passion for justice runs through my blood and informs the woman I strive to be. In addition to my blood family, I also want to acknowledge my "family-in-love," the Howards and the McGuires, who embraced me with open arms and who mourn my losses and celebrate my successes as though they were their own. I am incredibly grateful for all of them.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Aam Aadmi Party
AIWPA	All India Women's Progressive Association
ASJ	Additional Session Judge
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CURE	Center for Urban and Regional Excellence
CM	Chief Minister (of a given city)
CrPC	Criminal Procedure Code (of India)
DDA	Delhi Development Authority
DJB	Delhi Jal Board
DUSIB	Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board
DMRC	Delhi Metro Rail Corporation
FAR	Floor Area Ratio
FIR	First Incident Report (filed by police)
FTC	Fast Track Court
GONGO	Government Organized Non-Government Organization
HC	High Court (state level apex court)
INTACH	Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage
IPC	Indian Penal Code
JJC	Jhuggi Jhopri Colony/ Cluster
JNNURM	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
MCD	Municipal Corporation of Delhi
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
MWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
NCT	National Capital Territory
NCW	National Commission of Women

NIUA	National Institute for Urban Affairs
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PRIA	Society for Participatory Research in Asia
PWD	Public Works Department
RAY	Rajiv Awas Yojna
RTI	Right to Information Act 2005
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
TOI	Times of India Newspaper
UIDAI	Unique Identification Authority of India

Chapter 1: Introduction

Framing the Project

Two hours after leaving Central Delhi one morning in December 2013, I arrived at Savda Ghevra on a charter bus full of urban planners from around South and Southeast Asia.[2] 'Savda' was a jhuggi jhopri[3] resettlement colony established[4] seven years prior in the outer northwest peripheries of the city. Indeed, as I stepped off the bus, my cellphone notified me that it had switched to 'roaming' mode because I was now technically in Haryana. The area had been mostly empty rural land less than a decade prior until the Delhi Government had allocated small plots of it to eligible[5] JJ residents whose homes had been demolished to make way for infrastructural projects in preparation for the 2010 Commonwealth Games.[6] In contrast, there was no built infrastructure awaiting the new residents when they arrived; simply empty plots of land upon which they would have to build their new homes. While connections to various utilities and services had gradually followed in the years since their arrival, these remained sporadic and incomplete.

As the day progressed, Dr. Renu Khosla—director of the local NGO Center for Urban and Regional Excellence (CURE)—led our group of about twenty people around the colony and

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[2] The visit was part of a two-week workshop led by one of my urban planner research participants titled "A Rights Based Approach to Slum Resettlement."

[3] Jhuggi Jhopri is the colloquial Hindi term used in Delhi for the semi-permanent unauthorized homes of poor residents often built on public lands. Literally, the term refers to "hutments" or "shacks." Large groupings of JJs are often referred to, both colloquially and in government documents, as JJ colonies/ clusters or JJCs for short. JJCs are also commonly called *bastis*, which simply translates to "settlement" but is rarely used to refer to non-impoverished areas. See brief note at the end of this chapter about the technical/legal differentiation between slums and JJCs.

[4] I use this term "established" here loosely, as the government did little more that assign plots to the residents.

[5] Former DDA Commissioner of Planning, A.K. Jain notes that during any given resettlement drive, only an average of 40% of JJ and slum residents meet all eligibility requirements and are thus simply displaced.

[6] The Commonwealth Games are a series of sporting events (similar to the Olympic Games) held every four years in which athletes from nations and territories formerly colonized by the British Empire (known together as the Commonwealth of Nations") compete in various sports. In 2010, it was hosted by India in Delhi during the month of October.

introduced us to residents while she explained various ongoing 'livelihoods' activities facilitated by her organization. We stopped next to a large hole dug in the middle of a field separating groups of jhuggis to observe a sewage tank which had recently been installed therein. While Dr. Khosla explained that it was part of a joint project between the NGO and colony residents to facilitate the construction of safe in-home toilets, a group of resident women approached to talk to us. By far the most engaged in the conversation was a middle-aged woman named Champa dressed entirely in saffron colored clothes[7]—sari, sweater, and heavy shawl. She told us she was part of the original group who had initiated the sewage project.

Champa was formerly from Bihar, and had been living in Lakshmi Nagar near Central Delhi for fifteen years before being 'resettled' to Savda Ghevra seven years prior. She said that in Lakshmi Nagar, she had worked near her home at a "karkhana [factory]" making beads but that she and many of the other women had lost their jobs upon resettlement. They hadn't been able to find new work since there were virtually no job opportunities in the new area. She added, "Anyway, there were a lot of safety concerns when we first moved here so no one wanted to leave their home unattended. Our old community had been completely dispersed and no-one knew their new neighbors…There were a lot of thefts." She also mentioned that while her husband does not work either, her two grown sons earn a living for the family. They both work in Delhi, one in Okhla,[8] so their daily commute was 2.5 hours each way. They don't return until nearly 10:30pm every night and must sometimes find a place to sleep in the city during the week to avoid the long commute. A few feet to my right, I heard another women tell one of the planners that they have

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[7] I later learned that in the lead-up to the recently completed Local Assembly elections, the BJP had come to the colony and recruited several resident women to campaign for the party among their neighbors by offering them 200rupee incentives. They were now known in the colony as "BJP behens [sisters]," and Champa was one of them. I wondered if her clothing choice was a nod to the 'saffron' associated with the BJP and other Hindu nationalist parties.

[8] Okhla is located in the far southeast, and essentially at the opposite end of the city from Savda Ghevra.

water from bore-wells, but since this water is "namak [salty]" it's bad for drinking. Shrugging she added, "Instead we fight to get enough water from the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) tankers which come for short periods each day to the colony."

As the conversation continued, I noticed yet another woman who appeared to be in her mid-forties dressed in a gray floral sari and sweater. She had been standing slightly behind the other group of residents, quietly observing. I and one of the planners approached her and introduce ourselves. She tells us her name is Nargis and that she too had lived in Lakshmi Nagar prior to the resettlement. Leading up to the evictions, someone had set fire to her jhuggi—as they had to several others—to force her family to leave. She had lost everything she owned in the fire. While she had managed to get a plot allocated in Savda, years later it remained vacant with the exception of a short brick foundation because she had been unable to save enough money to build a home there. She is a widow raising her only child, a teenage daughter. Her only source of income was her late-husband's pension which she uses to purchase the bare necessities and to rent a single-room jhuggi for her and her daughter from another family. Her 'landlords' were a family who had also been "resettled," but they had eventually chosen to rent out the new home they had built in Savda and return to Lakshmi Nagar. They were now renting another jhuggi in Central Delhi where they had better access to work and schools for their children. "Close to 80% of the originally resettled households have done so," Nargis told me.

Later, as the planners and I boarded the bus to head to another resettlement colony, we saw several young children and a few adults carrying and rushing to fill different sized buckets and containers with water from a temporarily parked DJB tanker. As the tanker drove off, a young boy, who appeared to be no more than 8yrs old, clung to a metal rod attached to the back of the

tanker and jumped onto it—continuing to fill his small bucket even as the tanker drove ahead. Eventually, the boy jumped off with his water when the driver noticed him and stopped the tanker.

Seven years after being displaced to Savda Ghevra under the banner of city development and their "rehabilitation" from life in a 'slum,'[9] the majority of the residents continued to struggle with accessing basic resources and services as they had while living in JJCs in the heart of Delhi. What's more, those who could afford it had had to rebuild homes from scratch, while those who could not had been forced into even more tenuous housing arrangements then that which had been demolished. It made no difference whether they had already built 'pukka' or 'kutcha[10]' homes in their previous locations, they all had to start over again. These issues were compounded by the lack of income opportunities in the area, and acutely articulated in the lives of women for whom domestic responsibilities and toward whom the ongoing hostility of the city eliminated the possibility of long commutes into the city for work. Women like Nargis, who also lacked the social and financial 'security' afforded by a patriarchal family structure wherein one's marital family or adult sons[11] provided supplemental income (as with Champa), are even more vulnerable within an already precarious existence.

Yet the women I met in Savda Ghevra were some of the 'lucky' ones who had managed to meet the eligibility criteria and get any 'compensation' after the destruction of their homes. After

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[9] Slum and JJ resettlement projects are often (at least partially) framed by agencies like the DDA or DUSIB as a 'rehabilitation' of those residents from the precariousness and poor living conditions associated with such settlements.

[10] While the literal translation of "pukka" and "kutcha" is "cooked/ripe" and "unripe/raw" respectively, in the context of housing, "pukka" is -used to indicate a house constructed with permanent/stable materials such as brick and concrete while "kutcha" refers to 'makeshift' houses constructed with semi-permanent materials such as tarp and plastic sheeting. "Pukka" is also used to denote security, specifically when JJ residents request protection from demolition/ legal recognition from the government, it is usually phrased as a request to "make the jhuggis pukka."

[11] While adult unmarried daughters who work certainly contribute towards the financial security of their birth families, once married, any such contribution would be expected to go toward the household of their husband and his extended family.

all, former DDA Commissioner of Planning A.K. Jain once told me that during any given resettlement drive, only an average of 40% of JJ and slum residents meet all eligibility requirements. The rest are simply rendered homeless until they are able to secure alternative housing. Why, then—considering this looming specter of demolition, the improbability of 'resettlement,' and the persistent struggle to access basic necessities whether in JJCs or resettlement colonies—are JJCs and their residents popularly characterized in terms of 'benefitting' from government hand-outs within middle-class discourses? And where do JJ resident women fit within the growing discourses in Delhi surrounding women's safety and empowerment?

Perhaps because my arrival in Delhi in September 2013 coincided with the ubiquitous fervor of political campaigning for both the upcoming Delhi Local Assembly Elections in December of that year, and the National General Elections the subsequent Spring; it quickly became evident that the extent to which they were utilized as 'topics' of political discussion and debate belied the substantive marginalization of JJ residents and women in general. In other words, "the poor," "slums," and "women" were frequently deployed by political parties, mainstream media, and activist groups as core "issues" to be addressed in the upcoming elections. Yet most of these discourses offered thin monolithic characterizations of these 'populations' using the rhetoric of "city development" and "women's empowerment," but primarily highlighted the anxieties of middle-class men and patriarchal families around the perceived threat of unfettered urban 'blight'/ thwarted cosmopolitanism caused by the poor and the potential destruction of their family's/community's honor caused by the sexual assault of 'their' women. Thus, while 'Slums' and 'Women' were hyper-visible as discursively constructed categories (as were their correlating

'issues'), actual needs of JJ residents—particularly JJ resident women—were invisible within the city's shared imaginary.

As a corrective, this dissertation offers an ethnographic study of the intersectional marginalization of JJ resident women in Delhi and their negotiations for rights to the city's spaces, resources, and services. Towards this end, I entered the field with these overarching questions: 1. How do understandings of broader notions of gender and Indian womanhood bear upon public discourses on women's safety, the structure of women's empowerment initiatives, and gendered public policies in Delhi? 2. How are notions of *urban citizenship* and *legitimate belonging* constructed within public and political discourse, and how do these conceptions contour claims of rights to the city and negotiations for access to public space and basic resources? 3. How have perceptions and experiences of state opacity, bureaucracy, and corruption shaped the ways in which JJ resident women interact with governmental institutions and engage in political activity?

In my attempts to address these questions, I found that an amalgamation or layering of aspects of different theorizations on social locations and identities, citizenship, belonging, and the state provided a more useful interpretive framework for analyses, rather than relying wholly on one or two fully articulated theoretical frameworks. First, theorizations of intersectionality by scholars like Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Nira Yuval-Davis (2006a), and others allow for the articulation of otherwise marginalized identities—such as JJ resident women—through the foundational understanding that all identities are constituted by the intersections of multiple social divisions and the varying levels of power and oppression those social divisions entail. Particularly, their assertions that the various intersecting social divisions/identities of a person's identity must *not* be thought of as *additive* but as *constitutive* and inextricable are useful in understanding that JJ resident women do not experience certain

oppressions "as women" and others as "poor" or "JJ residents." As Yuval-Davis argues, "Such narratives often reflect hegemonic discourses of identity politics that render invisible experiences of the more marginal members of that specific social category and construct a homogenized 'right way' to be its member" (2006a: 195). This is particularly useful in understanding the ways in which dominant narratives about the oppression of "women" which have emerged in Delhi in recent years erase the experiences of poor and JJ resident women by focusing only on gender as the axis of difference and thus homogenizing the category of "womanhood" based on the dominant group. Rather, the various modes of oppression ought to be understood as experienced at the particular (and thus varied) intersections of identity embodied by individual (and groups of) women.

Moreover, Collins' (2000) assertion that any "matrix of domination" can be conceptualized as organized on four 'domains of power' allows us to understand the various levels at which JJ resident women's oppression and marginalization are articulated. Collins describes the various domains of power thusly: "The structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience and the individual consciousness that ensues" (2000: 294). Within the context of this dissertation, I particularly conceptualize the various bureaucratic processes and government policies as tentatively mapping onto what Collins describes as the structural domain, while the dominant discourses of proper womanhood and the pernicious narratives of JJ narratives circulated by the media and middle-class maps on to what she describes as the hegemonic domain. Also, the interpersonal domain is useful in thinking about the interactions of women occupying different social positions in Delhi—such as domestic worker and

middle-class employer—and the ways in which oppression is articulated within those relationships.

Similarly, Judith Butler's (2009) theorization of "epistemological frames of recognition" and "grievable life," along with particular re-formulations of Giorgio Agamben's (1998) *Homo Sacer* or "bare-life" by Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004), Peter Fitzpatrick (2001), and Akhil Gupta (2012), together offer a useful analytical framework through which to examine the relationship between the state and JJ resident women, and the ways in which it is contoured by dominant discourses surrounding women and JJCs. Butler asserts that "the frames through which we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured (lose-able or injurable) are politically saturated. They are themselves operations of power" (2009:1). Describing the precariousness of all life within the context of contemporary war, she adds "The shared condition of precariousness leads not to reciprocal recognition, but to a specific exploitation of targeted populations, of lives that are not quite lives, cast as 'destructable' and 'ungrievable'" (Ibid:30). She argues that these lives are "ungrievable" because of an underlying logic or 'frame' which constructs them as already outside that which is recognized as life or living; and also because their death is framed as necessary for the protection of those who are recognized as part of/within the frame of the living. While Butler's discussion of grievability focuses on the context of war, it can also be effectively applied to the ways in which JJ residents' experiences of injury, loss, or even death remains unrecognized and ungrievable within dominant discourses. This is particularly evident within the violent contexts of JJ demolitions and "resettlements" to the peripheries of the city, which are framed in dominant middle-class discourses as necessary for the development of the city or as being in the "public interest." Similarly, because JJ resident women do not fit into the dominant 'frame of recognition' which encompasses middle and upper-class women, their

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experiences of violence, injury, or loss are neither grievable nor recognizable within discourses of women's safety and empowerment.

It is here that layering Butler's theorization of 'unrecognizable' or 'ungrievable life' with reformulations of Giorgio Agamben's widely theorized notion of 'bare-life'[12] and 'exception' by such scholars as Das & Poole (2004), Fitzpatrick (2001), and Gupta (2012) becomes useful in examining the relationship of the Indian state with JJ resident citizens. While all the authors agree on the underlying characteristic of 'bare-life' as life which can be taken by anyone without being characterized as a homicide—essentially killable bodies—Fitzpatrick (2001) argues in contrast to Agamben (1998) that bare-life is not outside the boundaries of the law, but rather actively constituted through complex legal processes. Similarly, Das & Poole (2004) assert that indeed, the 'states of exception' wherein Agamben asserts bare-life is constituted and persists, can be conceptualized not as outside the state but rather within its margins. They argue, "states of exception, differences between membership and inclusion, or figures both inside and outside the law, do not make their appearance as ghostly spectral presences from the past but rather as practices embedded in everyday life in the present" (13). As an example, they point to the "extrajudicial" use of violence and authority by agents of the state who themselves embody the power of the law—such as policemen and local "bosses" or pradhans—as well as the illegibility of the state which incites the replication and negotiation of its practices in the margins. These reformulations of bare-life provide a framework through which to analyze the routine and

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[12] I must note that Butler distinguishes her concept of epistemological frames of recognition from the concept of bare-life (2009:29). However, her predicates her distinction between the two concepts on the exclusion of bare-life from the polis/state, while her theorizations of "ungrievable life" are constituted within the state through legal coercion. As such, I would argue that the re-formulations of bare-life included here which similarly argue that it is indeed constituted by legal processes and state institutions erase the distinction asserted by Butler.

ambiguously legal negotiations between JJ residents and local pradhans, bureaucrats, and police officers.

Similarly, Akhil Gupta's (2012) reformulation of bare-life places it securely within the realm of the state. Indeed, he argues that India's poor—whom he frames as bare-life—are not excluded from the political order but rather the state's legitimacy is predicated on its active inclusion of them in various bureaucratic interventions directed at ameliorating their poverty (6-7). However, he asserts that it is the nature of this very intervention, first through its normalization of staggering conditions of poverty as 'inevitable' through enumeration and statistics, then through the indifference and arbitrariness of bureaucratic practices (meant to ameliorate the conditions of poverty), that produces the poor as bare-life (Ibid). The structural violence of these bureaucratic practices are enacted as 'care' by the state but too often result in "excess" or preventable deaths of the poor. For Gupta, extreme poverty and the preventable death of the poor can in fact be theorized as "a direct and culpable killing" on the part of the state, and thus as biopolitics. Particularly, his conceptualization of bureaucratic practices—framed by the state in terms of 'care' and inclusion of poor populations—as the production of bare-life expands the framework discussed above for analyzing of JJ residents' attempts to navigate state bureaucracy. Furthermore, his explication allows us to understand how (women) JJ residents can simultaneously be the explicit target of government intervention and resource (subsidy) allocation, while also being excluded from substantive urban citizenship and unrecognized as 'grievable lives.'

Drawing on these theories as analytic frameworks through which to interpret my ethnographic data, I argue that widely-held understandings of what constitutes *womanhood* and *legitimate belonging* within the city's shared imaginary help to construct boundaries of urban citizenship and 'grievable life' (Butler 2009) that routinely exclude poor and JJ residents from

protections and entitlements emanating from the state. Particularly, I find that dominant middle-class discourses which narrowly define *proper* Indian womanhood and employ negative characterizations of JJ residents often become embedded in government policies and institutions, working to contour the relationship between the state and JJ resident women. Nevertheless, I also argue that JJ residents actively resist narratives which seek to de-legitimize their claims as Delhiites and often deploy rhetorical devices such as storytelling and testimony to garner support from various audiences and bolster their claims-making. Conversely, I find that shared experiences of government corruption, bureaucratic opacity, and being 'unheard' among JJ residents while attempting to meet their basic needs often engenders a general mistrust of institutions of power and informs routine preemptive strategies aimed at avoiding, minimizing, or circumventing exploitation by such institutions and individuals therein. Additionally, these experiences allow JJ residents to construct a narrative of institutions of power as sites of insidiousness and venality which in-turn serves as a resistive counter-narrative to dominant characterizations of JJ residents as criminal and morally corrupt. In the following section, I expand on some cross-cutting theoretical concepts that were important to my ethnographic analyses and offer a review of some corresponding relevant literature.

Cross-Cutting Theoretical Concepts & Review of Relevant Literature

Rights to the City & Legitimate Belonging

On the morning of November 13, 2013, residents of the Campa Cola compound located in the affluent South Mumbai locale of Worli prepared for another day of protesting the impending demolition of their illegally built high-rise flats by the Birhanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). As they had the previous day, they blocked the gates by parking their cars in a maze and forming human chains to prevent bulldozers from advancing and to restrict the movement of the

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police who were on-site to facilitate the Supreme Court sanctioned demolition. Just as confrontations between residents and authorities were heating up, word arrived that Supreme Court Justices Singhvi and Gowda had just granted a stay to halt the impending demolitions. When interviewed about his decision, Justice Singhvi said, "We can't even share how badly we were disturbed by last evening's developments. I slept thinking about it at 11:30pm. It was a disturbed sleep. I woke up at 3:30am and could not sleep thereafter." (Qtd in Dhananjay 2013) *Apparently, media coverage of the ongoing protests and confrontations between Campa Cola residents and BMC officials had made the justices sympathetic to the plight of the residents. Meanwhile, across town in central Mumbai, residents of Ganesh Kripa Society (a long standing JJ colony) continue to live in the ruins of their homes following yet another in a series of ongoing demolition drives by the Slum Rehabilitation Authority. In response to the Supreme Court's stay order in the Camp Cola case, Prabhangi, a Ganesh Kripa Society resident points out, "They say 'run the bulldozers over us,' and the police do nothing because they are rich. If we say the same thing, they just shove us into police vans. How come they can violate the Supreme Court ruling but we have to abide by the High Court order?"* (Qtd in Sunavala 2013)

While the events described above occurred in Mumbai, they are nonetheless reflective of a broader disparity among residents of India's urban centers both in terms of law and policy enforcement as well as recognized rights to the city. The Supreme Court justices' distress about the plight of the Campa Cola residents is particularly telling when juxtaposed with the growing trend of court rulings in favor of slum and JJ demolitions in recent years in what Bhan (2009) calls the "emergence of the judiciary into urban planning and government" (127). The court's interventions in JJ demolitions along with the antagonism and fragmentation that persists among India's contemporary urban residents, particularly between poor residents and the emerging

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middle-class, over appropriate norms for public space and forms of city aesthetics are predicated on underlying conceptions of who can legitimately make claims on the city and its spaces (Rajagopal (2001); Baviskar (2003); Tarlo (2003); Fernandes (2004); Anjaria (2011) Bhan (2009 &2014); Ghertner (2011)).

Indeed, *legality* is only one layer of a multilayered narrative that allows for the disproportionate characterization of Delhi's poor JJ residents as "illegitimate," particularly within a city comprised of mostly unauthorized housing (Bhan 2009: 131). Baviskar (2003) argues that while slums and JJCs are commonly presented as violations of Delhi's Master Plan,[13] they are in fact inextricable accompaniments to the formal plan because it offers no provisions of housing for the large numbers of the working poor who are needed to construct the city and its expansions (91). She further argues that the erasure and criminalization of the "necessary presence of the working class" was intrinsic to the project of producing deep inequalities (Ibid). Correspondingly, Fernandes (2004) discusses how marginalized social groups, such as urban poor residents, are actively rendered invisible within the dominant national political culture of post-Liberalization India through a political-discursive process. This process, which she calls "the politics of forgetting" allows an emerging consumer middle-class to discursively construct itself as *the* citizenry through active exclusion and spatial purification wherein urban public spaces become middle-class spaces (2416).

This narrative is, of course, is not passively accepted but rather challenged through various political mobilizations of marginalized groups creating an ongoing struggle between recognition

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[13] A comprehensive and long term development plan produced by the DDA which anticipates the city's growth and lays out a trajectory for its overall architectural and infrastructural development. The first Master Plan was published in 1962 with the help of the Ford Foundation. It is revised and amended with new projection every 20 years. Copies of the Master Plan are available on the DDA website. << https://dda.org.in/planning/mpd-1962.htm>>

and "the politics of forgetting" (Ibid).[14] Anjaria (2011) and Rajagopal (2001) each examine the contested spaces utilized by street hawkers in Mumbai and illustrate how these hawkers' understandings of their legal rights as citizens and middle-class conceptions of "legitimate" business and acceptable use of public space are continually in confrontation during routine raids of hawkers' merchandize by law enforcement, public protests and mobilizations of organized hawkers and public interest litigations (discussed further below). Anjaria (2011) notes that as middle-class consumer culture grows in Mumbai and this population begins to imagine themselves as members of a global cosmopolitan class, they have become more vocal and mobilize to "clean up" the city which inevitably includes the removal of street hawkers and other signs of "informality" that tarnish the idealized aesthetic of the cosmopolitan city.

Similarly, Rajagopal (2001) illustrates how city dwellers ranging from journalists to local storeowners tacitly reject the claims on public space of hawkers and other "informal" sectors of the city such as slum dwellers as they commonly refer to the presence of these sectors as "encroachment" and a drain on the "legitimate sector." This is particularly notable considering that the housing and businesses of middle and upper-class residents of the city are themselves often established and bolstered by various bureaucratic processes and practices that might *generously* be characterized as "semi-" or "extra-legal." Thus the disproportionate attribution of 'informality' to poor slum and JJ residents is rather indicative of underlying notions which link socio-economic class with legitimacy under the outward guise of 'legality.'

These contestations over rights to the city in India are perhaps most evident in the emergence of so-called public interest litigations (PILs) wherein middle-class city residents have

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[14] Leitner, Peck and Sheppard's 2006 edited volume *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers* offers some explorations of active resistance to such dominant neoliberal narratives and contestations around similar issues of governance and various forms of marginalization within other geographical contexts including cities in North America, Europe, and Africa.

used narratives of environmental pollution, visual blight, and blanket characterizations of danger and criminality to induce eviction and demolition orders from the courts. Interestingly, while PILs emerged in the Indian judicial system in the 1980s in an attempt to offer people in a "socially or economically disadvantaged position" an opportunity for relief,[15] they have grown into a powerful tool of middle-class groups to shape the city and its spaces (Bhan 2009: 133). PIL court orders have resulted in a range of impacts on the city landscape including the shutting down and removal of certain industries deemed "harmful" to outside the city limits, the sealing of unauthorized commercial enterprises in residential areas, and of course the evictions and removals of several informal settlements and JJ clusters throughout the city (Ibid). Indeed, Ghertner (2011) points to the 2007 demolition of a multi-generational JJ settlement in Delhi for being a "nuisance" to a neighboring middle-class residential neighborhood based on no more investigation of the so-called nuisance causing activities than pictures presented to the court of the "unsightly" conditions of the JJC (279-280).

In addition to their tangible material effects, the success of PILs brought by middle-class groups (i.e. resident welfare associations, common interest groups) has also had the effect of reifying the exclusionary middle-class centered narrative of urban citizenship and belonging. In contrast to certain judicial rulings of the 1980s, such as that of *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation* (1985) wherein justices used arguments that demolition of JJCs and displacement of residents amounted to infringement of their right to a livelihood and therefore their right to life as guaranteed by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution (Ramanathan 2005: 2909); court rulings in

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[15] In the 1985 landmark case S.P. Gupta vs. Union of India, Justice Bhagwati eased the rules of *locus standi*, which governed who may appear before the regional high courts and the Supreme Court of India, allowing ordinary citizens to bring matters of "public interest" to the highest courts to either "espouse the cause of the poor and oppressed (representative standing), or to seek enforcement of performance of public duties (citizen standing)" (Bhan 2009: 133).

recent years have instead likened JJ residents to "pickpockets" and equated the provision of resettlement housing to rewarding said thievery[16] (Bhan 2009: 135). In similar court rulings, JJ residents were alternatively characterized as "enchroachers"[17] and "unscrupulous citizens,"[18] while the JJCs themselves were said to be ever-spreading and would be tantamount to "anarchy"[19] if allowed to remain (Ibid). As these negative characterizations of JJCs and their residents permeate public discourse aided by popular media as well as judicial rulings and commentary, it is no longer only their actions (illegally building on public lands) or the residential habitat (lack of sanitation, ventilation, or clean water) that becomes "distasteful," but the residents themselves. As Bhan (2014) asserts, the aforementioned narratives become characterizations of their personhood in dominant discourse and are in-turn utilized to negate their claims on the city and the state (552). In particular, he argues, "as an identity, 'enchroacher' performs exactly the same function as 'citizen'—it supersedes other claims to belonging" (Ibid).

Thus, *rights to the city* and *legitimate belonging* serve as cross-cutting theoretical concepts through which to examine urban marginality and contestations of space in this dissertation. In the 1990s, following the translation of Henri Lefebvre's writings on the social production of space and rights to the city, and their consequent rediscovery by American scholars, there has been a proliferation of new scholarship and theorization of "Rights to the City," as well as a growing trend of social movements and organizations adopting the concept as a rights based approach to dealing with challenges of urbanization (Anjaria (2011); Harvey (2003 & 2012); Lefebvre (1991 & 1995);

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[16] In the Almitra Patel vs. Union of India (2000) case ruling, judge stated "rewarding an enchroacher on public land with an alternative free site is like giving a reward to a pickpocket for stealing" (Bhan 2009:135).

[17] Okhla Factory Owners vs. GNCTD (2002)

[18] Dhar vs Government of Delhi (2002)

[19] Hem Raj vs. Commissioner of Police (1999)

Purcell (2002); Zérah et al (2011)). In this much theorized work, Henri Lefebvre (1995) argues that the inhabitants of a city have a "transformed and renewed right to urban life" (158) which he labels *the right to the city*. Harvey (2003 & 2012) and other Neo-Marxist scholars extend and apply Lefebvre's concept to contemporary cities and explore how they might be reorganized in more socially just and ecologically sane ways, as well as become the focus for anti-capitalist resistance. This interpretation of the right to the city focuses on the right to shape and transform the city and its spaces, and is predicated on stronger democratic control and wide participation and mobilization to reshape the city. In contrast, Parnell and Pieterse (2010) offer a more reformist interpretation of 'right to the city' as a collection of rights for residents to be negotiated for from the developmental state, and see it as a crucial component of urban poverty reduction (159).

In this dissertation, I examine both the pragmatic aspects of rights to the city at the intersection of formal and substantive rights (i.e. legal as well as practicable and accessible), and the underlying notions of legitimacy and belonging that claims to "rights to the city" are predicated upon. I further examine the tension between such narratives of "legitimacy" and "rights" and narratives of "informality" and extra-legality often deployed by scholars when characterizing JJs, slums, and urban poor populations (Appadurai 2001; Chakrabarty 1992; Davis 2006; Rajagopal 2001; Sundaram 2004).

Additionally, I note that *belonging* and particularly *legitimate belonging* are themselves broadly theorized concepts, particularly in migration studies and psychology. However, my use of the term here more accurately aligns with what Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) calls "the politics of belonging" about which she asserts:

> The politics of belonging includes [] struggles around the determination of what is involved in belonging, in being a member of a community, and of what roles specific social locations and specific narratives of identity play in this. As such, it encompasses contestations both in the relation to the participatory dimension of

citizenship as well as in relation to the issues of the status and entitlements such membership entails. [*Emphasis added*] (2006: 205)

The *citizenship* aspect of belonging utilized in this dissertation is primarily that which scholars such as Holston (2014) and Zérah et al (2011) describe as "urban citizenship." While Holston (2014) asserts that urban citizenship "confers on residents of a city the right to inhabit the city and *not* be excluded from it, appropriate its spaces, and participate in its production" (259), Zérah et al (2011) clarify that unlike citizenship in relation to the nation, urban citizenship is less about legality than *legitimacy* and can be conceptualized as "a very fluid, but not very porous boundary between those people whose presence is legitimate in the city and *others*" (4).

Moreover, while urban citizenship may not inherently grant formal rights (as with national citizenship), claims of urban citizenship and legitimate belonging are deeply political and can be used to make legal claims on the city's spaces. A particularly salient example of this is the use of public interest litigations by middle-class groups discussed above wherein "public interest" is narrowly defined as that of said middle-class groups whose urban citizenship and legitimate belonging is reified through court orders and published court opinions. Accordingly, I use the above formulations of *legitimate belonging* and *urban citizenship* to map narratives about Delhi's poor residents in popular media, interviews of NGO and government staff, urban planners, and JJ residents themselves, to explore how in-migration, political participation, economic productivity, and documentation are all utilized to assert and question their legitimate belonging in the city and thus their right to entitlements and claims on space and resources.

Gendered Space & Proper Womanhood

"Akeli ladki khuli tijori hoti hai!" [*A girl alone is like an open vault/treasure chest!*]

<div align="right">

Jab we met (2007)
Dialogue from popular Bollywood film

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<u>Nirbhaya & the 'Rape Capital'</u>

On the evening of Sunday, December 12, 2012, a twenty-three year old woman named Jyoti Singh and her male friend Awindra Pratap Pandey boarded an off-duty charter bus to head home after watching a movie at a posh South Delhi mall. At the Munirka bus stop, following their unsuccessful attempts to catch a city bus or to hire an auto-rickshaw, they had been persuaded by a young man on the aforementioned charter bus who had assured them that it was also heading to their destination and would take them as paying passengers. Also on the bus were four other men, as well as the boy who approached them and the driver, who all appear to be friends. When Pandey notices that the bus is heading in the wrong direction and questions the driver, the six men including the driver taunt the couple about being out alone at night. The argument turns into a physical altercation wherein Pandey is bound and beaten, and Singh is brutally gang-raped by the men. Afterwards, the men throw Pandey and Singh off the bus naked and leave them on the side of the road. Seventeen days later, in a hospital in Singapore where she had been transferred by the Indian government, Jyoti Singh died from complications due to the injuries sustained during the violent attack.[20]

This attack proved to be a watershed moment in public discourses about sexual assault, particularly in Delhi. As I discuss in the following chapter, this attack was neither the first nor the last incidence of violent sexual assault in Delhi. Indeed, the city had long since garnered the eerie

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[20] The details of this incident have been widely circulated through both Indian and international media outlets. For a compiled timeline and discussion of the attack, the corresponding criminal trial, and the social and political events that it triggered, see Rajesh Talwar's 2013 book *Courting Injustice: the Nirbhaya Case and its Aftermath.*

moniker of 'rape capital' of India. Nevertheless, this particular attack incited widespread and sustained outrage and public outcry. Soon after the attack, its news became widely publicized both in local and international media. Due to a law in the Indian Penal Code,[21] news outlets were prevented from disclosing the name of the victim, so they gave her various symbolic pseudonyms ranging from "Jagruti (awareness)" and "Amanat (treasure)" to "Damini (Lightening)" after a 1993 Bollywood film in which a woman fights for justice after witnessing a sexual assault.[22] Ultimately, the name that stuck was "Nirbhaya (Fearless one)," and as a result the assault is now popularly referred to as the "Nirbhaya attack." Correspondingly, it is often used as a critical-event marker when discussing issues of women's safety, sexual assault, and associated policy and legislative changes in the same way as "9/11."

It isn't possible to say for sure why this particular assault garnered so much sustained public outcry while others before or since have not. Immediately after news broke of the attack, massive protests, both in Delhi and throughout India, emerged condemning sexual violence and calling for justice in that case as well as more stringent laws and implementation in general. These protests drew thousands of participants in Delhi and included clashes with police and the shutting down of various metro stations near the capital in attempts to control crowds. However, certain details about the social positions of both the attackers and the victims may offer some insight into the particular salience of this incident in the public's imaginary. Jyoti Singh or *Nirbhaya* was a physical therapy student, born and raised in Delhi to working class parents who had immigrated from the

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[21] Section 228A of the Indian Penal Code, prohibits the disclosure of the identity of victims of particular crimes, particularly sexual offences, to prevent the 'social victimization' or ostracization of said victim. While there are parameters to what crimes fit under this 'non-disclosure' ordinance as well as certain exceptions in cases of identity disclosure is necessary to prosecute the crime or is approved by the victim or their family, the offence is punishable by both a fine and up to two years in prison.

[22] Interestingly, while the sexual assault which serves as the catalyst for the films social justice narrative was that of a poor maid, the story nevertheless centers a middle-class woman (the titular Damini) who is moved to 'fight for social justice' after witnessing the sexual assault committed by her brother-in-law.

neighboring state of Utter Pradesh in search of better opportunities. While she was far from privileged, she was characterized in the media as a respectable, hard-working, girl-next-door trying to make something of herself. In contrast, her attackers were all poor young men, four of whom lived in Delhi's Ravi Das JJC. What's more, on the night of the attack, they were drinking and 'joy riding' in a charter bus not licensed to pick up public passengers or even operate within Delhi (Bhatt (2012); Sharma & Pokharel (2012)). In essence, they encapsulated the "fearsome" element commonly associated with Delhi's public spaces among the middle-class imaginary.

Nevertheless, even while Singh's "respectability" garnered her sympathy and outrage on her behalf, the all-too-familiar victim-blaming narratives questioning why she was out at night and who her male companion was quickly emerged. Indeed, Manohar Lal Sharma, the defense lawyer for the attackers publically proclaimed that the attack was in fact entirely the fault of Singh for being out at night with a boy to whom she wasn't married, as well as the fault of her companion for failing to protect her. He went as far as to say, "Until today I have not seen a single incident or example of rape with a respected lady… Even an underworld don would not like to touch a girl with respect" ('Victims in Delhi,' 2013). While Sharma received some public backlash, his statements were neither uncommon nor unique. As I illustrate in Chapter 3, the common response from the government, mainstream media, and within families to ensuring the safety of women in the city was not to make the city safer or more accessible to them, but rather to attempt to circumscribe their movements and increase their surveillance. As I discuss below, this is primarily because historic social norms in India and beyond have framed the domestic sphere as the 'proper' domain of women, and thus their presence within public spaces of the city is seen as neither normative nor legitimate. Indeed, within dominant discourses in India's urban centers, the presence of women in public space is at best characterized as a necessary evil if considered within the

context of travel to work or school, and at worst an antithesis to proper Indian womanhood and respectability.

Women & the 'Fearsome' Public

Every little girl is brought up to know that she must walk a straight line between home and school, home and office, home and her friend or relative's home, from one sheltered space to another.
Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan, & Shilpa Ranade (2011: vii)

Understandings of who can legitimately claim and consume public space in contemporary Indian cities (and beyond) not only have socio-economic dimensions but gendered ones as well. Indeed, scholars of both historical and contemporary India (Chakrabarty (1992); Kaviraj (1997); Phadke et al (2011); Hansen (2001); Lukose (2009)) assert that public spaces in Indian cities are locations where embodied gender and political citizenship are performed. Indeed, Phadke et al point to pervasiveness of this gendered socialization to space in the above quote. Similarly, such spaces are also sites at which legitimacy and entitlement are often, at times violently and aggressively, contested. Chakrabarty (1992) and Kaviraj (1997) each present an *Indian* (largely Hindu) notion of inside/outside or *ghar/bhaire* which predates European colonization and in which the disorderly, dirty, and "alien" *outside* is defined through its conceptual and spacial opposition to the auspicious, pure, and orderly *inside*. Accordingly, they both point to an intimate connection between women and interior space, asserting that notions of the "interior" share strong symbolic connections with women in general and particularly "the mistress of the household" (Chakrabarty 1992:542).

In contrast, Chakrabarty (1992) conceptualizes the "outside" within the Indian imagination as the 'bazaar' which he conceives broadly as a multi-purpose "spatial complex" including the market, the street and the *mela* [fair/festival] which serves as a site for social interaction, economic activity and recreation (543). The bazaar/ outside offers a distinct place of entertainment through

its juxtaposition of pleasure and danger experienced by men as they "roam the streets" (*ghumna-phirna*), interact with strangers, and openly pee (Ibid: 544). The "outside" then, particularly as it is conceptualized in terms of the 'bazaar' and place of *danger* and *pleasure*, is a distinctly gendered *masculine* space to which most women do not have (legitimate) access.

Similarly, Lukose (2009), in the context of post-liberalization Kerala, identifies a dominant notion of youth and masculinity encapsulated in the slang Malayali term "chetu" which she roughly translates to "hip," "cool," or "cutting edge" and which is used almost exclusively for males. She asserts that "the consumption of public space" is an important aspect of the *chetu* style epitomized by the activity of *karangan* translated as "to wander about" or "to gallivant" and characterized by its aimless quality (66-69). There is a clear correspondence between this notion of *karangan* and the notion of *ghumna-phirna* discussed by Chakarbarty (1992) that illustrates conceptions of the "outside" or "public" as a space to be consumed and enjoyed by distinctly masculine bodies. Lukose (2009) asserts the stark contrast of women's movement in public space to this aimless wandering that characterizes *chetu* young men as she states, "The demure female body enables a young woman to enter the public, but in ways that circumscribe her movements. She must be goal-oriented and contained as she traverses a public that is also occupied by young men, whose movements and trajectories are different--- aimless and wandering…A demure femininity in public retains its interiority, which is what allows it to enter the public in the first place" (80).

It is this notion of proper Indian womanhood necessitating circumscribed public movement, dubbed "demure femininity" by Lukose, to which Phadke et al are also referring in the introductory quote of this section. They problematize this notion of proper Indian womanhood and assert that the limitation of women's access to urban public space can be read as their inability to

access full urban citizenship (Phadke et al (2011:70-71). They point to the disproportionate focus and characterization of public spaces as inherently dangerous to women, despite the very real violence of domestic spaces wherein dowry violence, intimate-partner violence, honor killings, and sexual assault within the family occur, to argue that the fixation on 'women's safety' in public is in fact merely an extension of the narrative that inscribes the honor and purity of the community and nation onto women (Das (2007); Khan (2007)), and thus equates their 'protection' or sustained 'purity' with that of the community and nation (Phadke et al 2011: 29&53). In particular, they point to the fact that narratives of 'women's safety' in public seldom include considerations of non-sexual violence, and argue that instead the notion of 'safety' also encompasses the fear/removal of "undesirable" consensual sexual liaisons (Ibid: 17). Nevertheless, the perpetuation of the "inherently" unsafe public space along with circulating narratives of real-life instances of sexual violence in public spaces work to normalize the absence of women from urban public spaces, particularly after dark.

Elizabeth Stanko (1990) offers a comparable argument in the context of the UK and the US, asserting that the normalization of "feminine vulnerability" and the production of the "fearsome" outside work to authorize *legitimate spaces* wherein feminine respectability is equated with domestication and constrained mobility. Similarly, Hanmer and Saunders (1984) assert that, "Women's sense of security in public spaces is profoundly shaped by our inability to secure an undisputed right to occupy that space" (39). Additionally, I would argue that dominant narratives delegitimizing and criminalizing the presence of poor JJ residents in the city discussed above further complicates access to the city's public spaces for JJ resident women who fit neither the idealized norms of Indian Womanhood which center on middle-class women, nor the increasingly

exclusionary parameters of urban citizenship and belonging that paints JJCs and their inhabitants as antithetical to the 'collective' vision of Delhi as a world-class city.

As Phadke et al (2011) point out, contemporary popular narratives in India's cities place "women's" access to public space in opposition to that of other marginal groups (11), drawing on the stereo-typical images of poor immigrant men or "immoral" dangerous JJ resident men as occupiers of public space and perpetrators of violence against "women." In addition to its deeply problematic characterizations of immigrant and JJ resident men, this rhetoric of course completely erases the existence of poor immigrant and JJ resident women. In this rhetoric, "woman" and "immigrant" or "poor JJ resident" cannot be identifiers of the same person. Particularly, the "women" whose safety is being discussed are distinctly "respectable" middle-class women such as those alluded to by Manohar Lal Sharma above, whose very respectability through domesticity presumably provides them security from "even the underworld don."

In contrast, this notion of domesticity-as-security, even if we were to accept it as effective or desirable, becomes impossible for JJ resident women who live with and work in close proximity to the supposedly malevolent immigrant JJ resident men who make public space "fearsome." Within this context, theorizations of intersectionality which argue that power and oppression do not exist in static dichotomous oppositions in which one group is always the oppressor while another is always the oppressed prove valuable. They offer the insight that people occupy shifting roles of privilege and oppression depending on different contexts and in relation to different people and social networks. Thus, while Delhi can be said to be a hostile city for women overall, the city's poor JJ resident women can be conceptualized as navigating a differently articulated "matrix of domination" (Hill Collins 2000) than their middle and upper class counterparts. Similarly, while JJ resident men share many of the social and economic oppressions experienced by women living

in similar communities, their ability to occupy and traverse public space is distinct from their female counterparts.

Outline of Chapters

This dissertation consists of six chapters, four of which present my methodological approaches and data analysis. In the following chapter, simply titled "Research Methodology," I contextualize the processes through which my study was designed and conducted. I present an overview of my field sites, research participants, and data collection methods as well as provide reasonings for how I came to choose them. Furthermore, with the aim of being as transparent as possible about the various social, political, and logistical variables that helped to shape this study, I expound upon my entry into the field site, the major social and political events and discourses on the ground during the duration of my fieldwork, and examine certain aspects of my intersecting social identities and how they emerged as salient during various ethnographic encounters and further point to limitations of my study.

In the first substantive chapter of this dissertation, "Chapter 3: Intersections of Class and Womanhood," I examine how dominant middle-class discourses on women's safety and broader notions of gender and Indian womanhood bear upon the relationship of the state with its women citizens. Particularly, I explore how these constructions of Indian womanhood and narratives of safety inform the structure of initiatives meant to 'empower' women and markedly gendered public policies in Delhi more broadly, and illustrate the ways in which they fail to address the needs and experiences of poor JJ resident women.

In chapter 4, titled "Legitimate Belonging and Right to the City," I explore how notions of "legitimate belonging" and citizenship are constructed within public and political discourse, and the ways in which these conceptions contour claims of rights to the city and negotiations for access

to public space and basic resources. In particular, I look at the ways in which the media and research participants occupying different social identities position themselves vis-à-vis the state, the city, and other Delhi residents by accessing particular narratives about themselves and the "other." I further explore the ways in which JJ residents and their allies alternatively utilize appeals to conscience and rights-based approaches to negotiate for secure housing and access to basic resources and services.

In Chapter 5, titled "Politics and the Rise of the *Common Man*," I explore how perceptions and experiences of state opacity, bureaucracy, and corruption have shaped the ways in which JJ residents have tended to interact with governmental institutions and engage in political activity. I also look at how the recent emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party (which translates to the "common man party"), its use of distinctly socio-economically classed imagery, its claims of representing the interests of the poor, and its calls for "grass-roots governance" have shifted the political landscape of Delhi. I further problematize the inherently gendered language of the party's name within the broader context of gendered political participation and the intersectional identities of women JJ residents. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I highlight some of my key findings and arguments and offer some reflections this study's scholarly contributions.

Important Notes about Local Bureaucratic Structures and Legal Terminology

The bureaucratic landscape of India, and in particular that of the Delhi National Capital Territory (NCT) is vast, complex, and ever-changing. Indeed, the profusion of poverty alleviation and slum/JJ intervention schemes, the repeated jurisdictional changes, and constant shifts in eligibility criteria for access to resources and benefits are a few examples of what make the state bureaucracy in Delhi opaque and "illegible" (Das 2004), particularly to the city's poor and marginalized residents. While I don't feign to understand all of its complexities, I offer here a

general overview of some important policies that have framed the postcolonial state's approach to slums, JJCs, and their residents. I follow that with a brief of clarification of certain pertinent legal terms as well as the local government bodies involved in the governance of slums and JJs and the implementation of various state interventions in those areas.

Policy & Legislation

In 1956 Parliament passed the *Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act* which defines a slum as follows: "Any area (where) buildings in that area (a) are in any respect unfit for human habitation; or (b) are by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement and design of such buildings, narrowness or faulty arrangement of streets, lack of ventilation, light or sanitation facilities, or any combination of these factors, are detrimental to safety, health or morals."[23] It further states that "a competent authority" who finds a site meeting these criteria may proceed to declare it a slum through the local gazette and then determine whether the proper course of action is structural/infrastructural improvement or demolition and reconstruction. It is important to note here that the initial purpose of the act was to provide protections for the tenants of privately owned "uninhabitable chawls" or tenements and is predicated on tenants being re-settled into the improved or rebuilt structures once they were made "habitable." It does not, however, take into account the "illegal" homes of poor urban residents built on government owned land and thus offers them no legal protection or guarantee of resettlement. Nevertheless, this act and its corresponding addenda have provided the statutory basis and guidelines adopted by most states as the primary legislation for slum interventions until the 1990s[24] (Ramanathan 2005: 2908). In 1990,

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[23] The entire text of the parliamentary act and subsequent addenda is available online here: https://indiankanoon.org/doc/839084/

[24] In 1990 the Law Commission of India recommended the "legislative protection of slum and pavement dwellers" in its 138th Report (Ramanathan 2005: 2908-2809). While the recommendations of this report were not directly implemented, since then there have been several policies that call for the protection of slum residents such as the

the government of Delhi adopted a new slum policy that emphasized a three-pronged approach including in-situ (on-site) upgradation, relocation, and environmental improvement of existing slums and JJCs. This policy remains the general reference frame for the various slum and JJ interventions that have emerged since that time. However, the dominant strategy utilized on the ground has remained demolition and conditional resettlement for those who meet "eligibility" criteria (DuPont 2008: 80). For a timeline of relevant slum and JJ initiatives and legislation since 1956, see Table 1 below.

Table 1: *Timeline of selected government policies and schemes impacting slums and JJs*

Important Regulatory and Administrative Policies Impacting Slums & JJCs	Socio-Economic and Environmental 'Improvement' Schemes for Slums & JJs
Slum Areas (Improvement & Clearance) Act, 1956 (n)[25]	Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums (EIUS] scheme, 1972 (n) *initial local implementation in Delhi via Urban Basic Services (UBS) & later via the revised Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP), 1990
Establishment of Slum & JJ Department in MCD, 1962 (s)	Nehru Rozgar Yojna (NRY) targeting unemployment and underemployment of urban poor), 1989 (n)
JJ Recognition through city-wide survey and issuance of V.P. Singh Tokens, 1989-1990 (s)	Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Program (PMIUPEP), 1995 (n)
138th Law Commission of India Report (recommending 'legislative protection' of slum & pavement dwellers), 1990 (n)	National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) focusing on employment through entrepreneurship, 1997 (n)
National Housing Policy, 1994 (n)	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) which had specific programs to improve access to basic services and housing for slum & JJ residents, 2005 (n)
National Housing & Habitat Policy, 1998 (n)	Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) a low-cost housing scheme as part of a larger 'slum-free India' objective, 2011 (n)
DUSIB Act (establishing the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board), 2010 (s)	Rajiv Rinn Yojana (RRY) aimed at increasing homeownership among poor urban residents by extending them lines of credit, 2013 (n)

National Housing Policy (1994); The National Housing and Habitat Policy (1998); The Eighth (1992-1997) and Ninth (1997-2002) Five Year Plans; JNNURM; and RAY (see Banerjee 2012)

[25] 'n' indicates implementation at the national level, while 's' indicates implementation at the state level

Terminology & Jurisdiction

Of particular import is understanding the legal distinction of "slums" and "jhuggi jhopris." While both are unauthorized homes of the poor built on public lands and share similar living environments often characterized by the lack of basic services such as clean water and adequate sanitation; According to legal terminology, "slum" or "notified slum" only refers to those areas that have been officially characterized or "notified" as such by a government agency such as the DDA through the *Slum Areas Act* of 1956. This official recognition gives residents of those areas legal entitlement to basic services and guarantees due process and notice (and tentatively resettlement) if their slum is demolished (Sheik and Banda 2015: 75). While large swaths of Delhi, namely the entire walled city of Old Delhi have been notified as slums, most areas that fit the criteria have not been notified and as such are referred to as "Jhuggi Jhopris" or "Jhuggi Jhopri bastis." In fact, the last time an area in Delhi was officially notified as a slum was in 1994 (Ibid). Accordingly, both of my primary field sites were technically Jhuggi Jhopri colonies since they had not been "notified" as slums despite their lengthy existence, and as such they were particularly vulnerable to eviction and demolition with no resettlement. Furthermore, I note here that "slums" and "jhuggi jhopris" constitute only a fraction of "unauthorized" housing in Delhi. Indeed, Bhan (2009) asserts that under twenty-five percent of existing housing in 2003 met all the conditions of legality at the time they were constructed (131). For a list of the various categories of within the spectrum of "unauthorized" housing in Delhi NCT, see Table 2, below.

Table 2: *Typology of 'unauthorized' housing in Delhi NCT*

Type of Housing Settlement	Description of Settlement Type
Jhuggi Jhopri Cluster/ Colony (JJC)	Housing clusters of the poor built on public lands without the authorization of the land-owning government agency. Characterized by economic poverty & infrastructural fragility—particularly the lack of basic services such as clean water and adequate sanitation
Slum-Designated Area	Housing and commercial settlements of the poor characterized by economic poverty & infrastructural fragility similar to JJCs. Unlike JJCs, these settlements are legal due to their notification as 'slums' under the 1956 Slum Areas Act.
Unauthorized Colony	Middle or upper-class housing settlements built illegally often built on private land which has been split into plots and sold off by owners and developers in violation to the Master Plan of Delhi's zoning allowances and building norms. Despite illegality, these settlements are integrated into the city's infrastructure and have access to all the basic services (water, sewage, electricity).
Regularized-Unauthorized Colony	Middle or upper-class housing settlements which were illegally constructed and thus originally classified as "unauthorized colonies," but have obtained legal recognition/ authorization through a series of (legally ambiguous) bureaucratic processes—often, years after their construction.

Finally, I note that there have been multiple shifts in local governmental jurisdiction over slum areas and JJs resulting in truncated projects, gaps in oversight, and redundant or conflicting criteria for housing eligibility. In 1962 the *Slum and JJ Department* was established within the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and was tasked with implementing the Slum Areas Act of 1956. Then, in 1967 the department was transferred over to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). Between 1974 and 1980, the department moved between the MCD and the DDA several

times during which it continued to implement the Slum Areas Act of 1956, as well as the Jhuggi Jhopri Removal Scheme (JJRS) of 1958, and the various "beautification" and "family planning" sterilization drives of the Emergency period of the mid-1970s. The department settled back within the MCD in 1992 and stayed there until 2010 when the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi passed the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) Act wherein a free-standing unit called DUSIB under the purview of the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) was established and empowered to "notify" slums, improve JJ areas by providing basic resources, and of course to demolish and resettle slum and JJ areas where it deems it appropriate.[26] Nevertheless, because DUSIB is not a land owning agency and Delhi's JJCs stand on land owned by more than fifteen different public agencies such as the DDA, it must work in conjunction with those land owning agencies in order to proceed with projects on their lands (Sheik and Banda 2015: 75).

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[26] Brief history of the Slum Department and its various iterations is available on the DUSIB website. << http://delhishelterboard.in/main/?page_id=148>>

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

Research Routes and Trajectories

Unlike research conducted in laboratories, ethnographic field research has a tendency to stretch beyond and transform the parameters we set as researchers. Beyond the initial issues of accessing particular research sites and populations, the "field" is itself a dynamic and ever-changing variable impacted by local and international politics and trends as well as individual and institutional actors. Thus, it is important for proposed ethnographic projects to be flexible and responsive to emerging issues within the field. In the case of my own project, there were circumstances ranging from bureaucratic hurdles to the unexpected rise and early success of a new political party that ultimately helped to shape the focus and trajectory of my research. In the following section I aim to provide a brief description of my entrance into the field and the processes through which my research foci shifted in subtle but important ways. I present this account with the assertion that all knowledge is situated and that understanding the contexts within which research was produced can only enrich our understanding of the research findings (Collins (1991); Harding (1991); Haraway (1988)). Moreover, I follow Christopher Bondy (2012) in arguing that accessing field sites is an ongoing process of negotiation that can reflect important social and political conditions of a given research context and as such can itself provide interesting ethnographic insight (579).

During the academic summer breaks of 2011 and 2012, I conducted preliminary research in Delhi funded by Michigan State University's Pre-dissertation Travel Fellowship. In addition to helping me formulate research questions for my dissertation through interviews with NGO staff and local scholars, this pilot study was also designed to help me identify particular field sites, establish affiliations with relevant institutions, and build connections with potential dissertation

research participants. At the conclusion of my preliminary research, I had identified the Govindpuri/ Kalkaji jhuggi jhopri cluster in South Delhi as my primary research site. It is one of the largest JJ clusters in Delhi and had recently been chosen by the newly established Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) as a site for one of the first "in-situ" rehabilitation schemes in which new homes for eligible residents would be built near their existing JJCs instead of being displaced to the peripheries of the city[27]. Moreover, the Govindpuri/ Kalkaji area has an established history of NGO presence, including one NGO which had been active in the community for twenty years and had several ongoing income-generation and women's empowerment initiatives. Furthermore, the assistant director of said NGO had agreed to give me access to their activities for my research. Finally, Govindpuri/ Kalkaji is situated in close proximity to more affluent residential and commercial areas which made it an ideal site to examine issues of legitimate belonging and rights to the city. During that time, I was also able to establish an institutional affiliation[28] with the Delhi School of Planning and Architecture (SPA) which gave me access to scholars and urban planners, many of whom had worked with the various government development agencies in designing JJ resettlement housing and the city's Master (Development) Plan. They in turn introduced me to several government officials within the DDA, MCD, and DUSIB who agreed to become my research participants, but to whom I would not otherwise have had access. While accessing government officials in general can be difficult for any independent researcher, it was even more difficult during the period I was conducting my dissertation research due to the election

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[27] The guidelines for Rajiv Awas Yojna (RAY), an initiative launched by the Indian Central Government in June 2011 with the vision of creating a "slum free India," present in-situ rehabilitations and upgradations as two out of 3 possible slum interventions in which residents can stay in their existing location in order to maintain livelihoods and networks. << http://mhupa.gov.in/writereaddata/RAYGuidelines.pdf>>

[28] As a prerequisite for issuing a research visa, the Indian Embassy requires a formal letter of affiliation from an Indian school, research institution, or registered NGO on behalf of the researcher, which must then be re-certified upon the researcher's arrival in India during the Foreigner Registration process.

season (which I will discuss later in this section). It is only through the personal references of the scholars at SPA, and in some cases by acquiring the personal contact information of the officials from my SPA contacts that I was able to access and recruit them to participate in my study.

Unfortunately, upon my return to conduct my dissertation research in the fall of 2013, I encountered several road blocks that prevented me from conducting my study in Govindpuri/ Kalkaji and with the NGO that I had originally planned. First, despite the initial traction of the proposed "in-situ" rehabilitation scheme by DUSIB, it had come to a virtual stand-still amidst the uncertainty of the local elections and their potential to change all the political players and thus determine the fate of any ongoing or planned development projects. Secondly, and perhaps more shockingly, I discovered that in the fifteen months I'd been gone, the NGO I was planning to work with had expanded, re-organized, and shifted away from all of its initiatives on women's empowerment and women's livelihoods (which had been active for over a decade) to focus on working with children and youth on literacy through their community "lab" school and through a government partnership which brought them into the city's public schools.[29] What's more, my previous contacts were no longer working at the NGO which made accessing the staff and their various projects exceedingly difficult despite initial indications of their continued willingness to work with me. Ultimately, I was forced to find another NGO more open to being included in my research which in turn shifted my JJ research site since the NGO staff would be integral in helping me establish contacts among the residents of the JJ clusters in which they were active.

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[29] While it is unclear what the specific impetus was for this shift, it does bring to mind the struggles of shifting priorities faced by small grassroots organizations when they attempt to scale-up. When I returned in 2013, the organization's innovative pedagogy in its (single) lab school in a Govindpuri JJC had gained great popularity among local government administrators and international donors alike. As a result the NGO had been tasked with implementing its teaching methods and practices to 300 MCD government schools and 50 slums. This seems to have left little space for the relatively small localized initiatives they had in Govindpuri organizing JJ resident women for livelihoods training and advocating for access to basic resources and services from the government.

As with accessing government officials, my contacts at SPA proved to be the most effective avenue through which to establish a connection with a new NGO that would assent to participating in my study. During a conversation about participatory planning and various urban poverty reduction initiatives in India, Ms. Banashree Banerjee, an experienced urban planner and visiting faculty member at SPA, invited me to attend an international workshop she was co-organizing in Delhi on behalf of the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, Rotterdam (IHS) titled *A Rights Based Approach to Resettlement, (Inter)national Standards and Local Practices.*[30] Designed as a refresher course for urban planners coming from South Asian countries, this course incorporated case studies of slum resettlement primarily from Delhi and Mumbai and included various presentations by NGO workers, researchers from the TATA institute and the Center for Policy Research in Delhi, as well as several agents from the DDA and DUSIB. Aside from being a valuable site for participant observation among individuals actively involved in the decision making surrounding the demolition of slums and the construction of resettlement housing, it also became an important networking event. While there, I was able to establish connections with several DDA and DUSIB officials who would participate in my study and with the director of CURE, an NGO implementing various livelihoods, sanitation, and health initiatives on the ground in several JJ colonies in eastern Delhi as well as in Savda Ghevra, a JJ resettlement colony on the north western periphery of the city. After two site visits and a meeting with Dr. Khosla (the director of CURE) to discuss my research interests and the work that the NGO was doing in various JJ colonies, she agreed to let me observe the organizations activities in two neighboring and long-standing JJ communities in East Delhi and to introduce me to some residents in those communities. These two locales, Aradhaknagar and Kalandar Colony became my primary field sites. In addition

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[30] The IHS refresher course/ workshop took place December 9-20, 2013 at the Human Settlements Management Institute, HUDCO House in New Delhi, India.

to the fact that these JJCs were accessible to me, I also chose these sites because, similar to the Govindpuri/ Kalkaji JJCs, they had emerged decades ago and were firmly embedded among the more affluent and commercial areas around them. And while they had not yet been targeted by the new RAY initiative for intervention, there had been many infrastructural projects undertaken in their area in recent years, including a highway and metro expansion project that had already resulted in the demolition and displacement of a section of the Aradhaknagar colony.

As I alluded earlier, my arrival in Delhi in September 2013 also coincided with the intense and ubiquitous political campaigns in the final months leading up to the local elections which took place on December 4th. These elections and the flurry of political activity surrounding them proved to be an important component of my project. Considering the explorations of legitimate belonging, citizenship, and rights to the city which are at the heart of my research, it is not surprising that contemporary political rhetoric and mobilization would provide significant sites of data production for me. However, it was the unexpected emergence of a viable and competitive third political party, in a political system which had historically been dominated by the Congress Party and in more recent years Hindu nationalist opposition parties (or coalitions of parties) like the BJP,[31] which offered new and interesting avenues of inquiry for my project. The fact that this was a party which called itself the party of the "common man" and had apparently garnered the support of large swaths of the city's poor residents,[32] including those living in JJ colonies, provided an opportunity

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[31] This characteristic of the Indian political party system in the mid-twentieth century was described as "one party dominance" by Rajni Kothari in which the dominant party (i.e. Congress) can be identified as the "party of consensus" while the opposition functions as the "party of pressure," and as such serves to critique, pressure, and censure the dominant party but doesn't present as a real alternative to it (1964: 1162). While the early 1990s saw a decline in the Congress Party's dominance and rise of new opposition parties in different states, the last two decades have shown the continued salience of the Congress party and the emergence of BJP/VHP Hindutva right wing as the dominant opposition. [See also Y. Yadav's *EPW* article "Reconfiguration in Indian Politics" (1996); and S. Seshia's *Asian Survey* article "Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party" (1998)]

[32] Following the Delhi local elections, many media outlets reported that the unprecedented success of AAP candidates was due in large part to poor voters. One *Times Of India* article asserts that the party's biggest victories

for me to examine shifting narratives of citizenship, rights, and belonging along with formal political engagement at a unique historical moment.

<div align="center">**Research Sites**</div>

Delhi

According to the 2011 Indian Census, the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi has a population of sixteen million, an estimated fifty-two percent of whom are identified as living in areas designated as Slums or Jhuggi Jhopri Clusters (JJC). While the total population living in slums appears to have decreased since the 2001 census, the document states that the wide ranging slum removal schemes between 2001 and 2011, including the intensified period leading up to the Commonwealth Games of 2010, have resulted in the un-enumerated displacement of a large portion of the previous slum population throughout the city (2011 Census: 49). As discussed in Chapter 1, the demolition of slums and the displacement of slum residents has a long and sordid history in Delhi. In particular, there have been three major waves of slum/JJ clearance and resettlement in the city that occurred in the 1960s, 1970s, and more recently between 1990 and 2007 (Banda et al 2014). While these periods of increased government intervention have often coincided with broader policy shifts toward city "beautification" and large scale construction of infrastructure, the pattern of ongoing jurisdictional shifts in terms of governing agencies for slums and JJCs, new and conflicting policies and schemes for resettlement,[33] and the overall opacity of the state's policies on housing and land tenure have created an ever present spectre of eviction and demolition in Delhi.

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were from JJ clusters and unauthorized colonies and adds "the party made an almost clean sweep in rural Delhi, resettlement colonies and JJ clusters" (December 9, 2013).

[33] In the 6 years that I've been conducting research in India 2010-2016, I've witnessed the implementation of three separate national level Slum/JJC interventions (IHSDP; RAY; PMAY) and countless local level schemes with often redundant and at times conflicting agendas.

Correspondingly, promises of protection from eviction or guarantees of resettlement housing are a staple of politicians' platforms during election season. As such, the ethnographic field site for my study often expanded beyond the boundaries of the JJCs to include places like coffee shops, train stations, and the dinner table of my landlord where discussions and debates about demolitions, evictions, and "regularization" casually emerged. Similarly, discussions of the hostility of public spaces for women and of women's safety in general were present in all social settings I inhabited across socio-economic strata.

Figure 1: *Map of India*[34]

[34] Image from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html

Figure 2: *Map of Delhi NCR*[35]

Map data ©2016 Google

Aradhaknagar and Kalandar Colony

As indicated earlier in this chapter, most of my research data among JJ residents comes from Aradhaknagar and Kalandar colony which are located in the Shahadara district of East Delhi. Since neither are "notified slums," there's little official documentation available that confirms when these settlements first emerged or the overall socio-cultural make-up of the colonies' residents. However, the local consensus among residents, NGO workers, and planners is that they are at least thirty years old. One petition letter submitted to Delhi's Chief Minister requesting resettlement housing on behalf of residents displaced from Aradhaknagar in 2009 claims that the colony has been in existence since as early as 1961.[36] According to the official list of JJ clusters[37]

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[35] Image from Google Maps available at :
https://www.google.com/maps/place/Delhi+Metropolitan+Area/@28.5088579,76.0996165,8z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x390ce19466e19ae1:0x45ceeb565fd5de6c!8m2!3d28.6139485!4d77.209031

[36] This letter and its contents are discussed in depth at the end of chapter 4. See Appendix A for a copy of the original letter in Hindi.

[37] It's important to note that while these JJ clusters have been enumerated by DUSIB, they have not been officially "notified" as slums and thus do not possess the albeit limited government recognition that would allow them to demand resettlement housing (pending acceptable documentation of residency) in the event of demolition.

in Delhi released in 2011, there are 365 households living on 17,315 square meters of land in Aradhaknagar and 3,500 households living on 25,023 square meters of land in Kalandar Colony (2011: 14). Note the disproportionate ratio of households to land area, particularly in Kalandar Colony wherein a household (which can sometimes have a dozen members) appears to reside on an average of around 7 square meters of land according to these figures. I also note that official tallies of households are consistently lower than those offered by residents which may indicate that households are living in even less space.

These JJ colonies are nestled among mixed income residences as well as commercial buildings and are within short walking distance from the Dilshad Garden metro station, the easternmost stop on the red line which runs through central Delhi to parts of the northwest. Aradhaknagar sits adjacent to the intersection of two large highways, GT Road and Aradhak Marg, the 2009 expansion of which led to the above mentioned eviction and demolition[38] of a segment of that colony. Some of those displaced residents now live in tents and makeshift shanties in what used to be a public park within the colony. With the exception of the aforementioned new tents and shanties in the park, all the homes within these colonies were constructed using brick or other permanent materials often times reclaimed by the residents from old ruins or demolition sites. The sturdiness of the structures attests to their age, with many homes having multiple stories built as the families expanded. Of course, the size and elaborateness of the houses varies among residents' income levels and other socio-economic factors. For instance, there are some who can only afford to rent single room jhuggis from other residents or non-resident landlords while others have managed to convert their homes into multi-use spaces where they ran commercial enterprises from the ground floor while living in the above stories. Conversations with residents and NGO staff

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[38] See Appendix B for a copy of the notice given to residents prior to demolition and eviction.

indicated that while the earliest inhabitants of Kalandar colony had come mostly from Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, more recent inhabitants came from a variety of places including Rajasthan and the Nepal border.

While Aradhaknagar is relatively smaller, both of these colonies are densely populated and have an intricate network of narrow streets and alleys running through them. Because the jhuggis serve as both residence and work-space for many residents, the colonies are bustling with activity during the daytime. Walking through the JJ clusters, I often saw young children playing, small groups of women sitting inside jhuggis sewing together for local garment factories, residents selling small sundry items through the window of their jhuggis, "rag-pickers" collecting trash from homes using bicycle-pulled wagons, and mobile food-stalls set up near the main streets. And while residents had to collect water from communal taps located in different places throughout the colony, there was a dense network of wires running across the tops of the jhuggis connecting the jhuggis directly to electric power provided by a private company.

Kalandar colony has a relatively new communal toilet complex built with concrete and high walls that houses a handful of stalls each for men and women. The toilets are maintained by a non-resident care-taker who commutes to the colony every day. He in turn charges male residents a rupee to use the facilities and the money he collects is his salary. While the women in Kalandar colony aren't charged to use the facilities, a CURE staff member mentioned that this is not true for community toilets in all JJ colonies. Since the caretaker is not a resident, the facility closes when he goes home each night around ten o'clock. The limited hours of operation as well as the charge for men at times result in residents having to resort to open defecation. Nevertheless, these toilets are utilized by around 70% of the colony, while the other 30% have managed to build in-home toilets. It is notable however that the city's sewage network is not connected to the colony, so while

the waste coming from the in-home toilets simply spills out into the gutters lining the narrow streets in front of the jhuggis within the colony, the refuse from the community toilets is collected inside a large septic tank and periodically pumped into a *nala* (an open sewage dump) nearby. Separating the rear border of Kalandar Colony from several factories where many residents of the colony work is a low wall and a small field full of trash and stagnant water from which emanates an overwhelmingly putrid chemical smell which I later discovered is caused by run off from the factories.

Figure 3: *View of Kalandar Colony JJC from platform of Dilshad Garden Metro Station*[39]

While the above described were my primary JJ field sites, I also made visits to several other JJ colonies including Geeta Colony and Jhilmil also in East Delhi where I conducted participant observation of CURE run workshops and community meetings. Additionally, I accompanied Subhadra Banda and Shahana Sheik, researchers from the Center for Policy Research Delhi, on

[39] Photo taken by author in January 2014

visits to South Delhi's Bhoomiheen Camp JJC in Govindpuri to talk to residents about their perceptions on the proposed in-situ rehabilitation. I also visited Kathputli Colony, an old and much contested JJ colony in central Delhi, during a series of protests following the unexpected DDA announcement of impending evictions and demolitions of the colony along with a transfer of an as-yet unspecified segment of residents deemed eligible to a nearby transit camp.

Aside from the JJ colonies, I also conducted interviews of government agents, NGO workers, and planners often inside their offices. These institutional settings were themselves important field sites providing a material context and positioning for said participants and their work. While the interiors of those spaces offered insights into the ideological perspectives of each institution through displays of posters and mission statements and could thus provide either a welcoming or hostile space for particular visitors; the physical accessibility (or lack thereof) of the office buildings by public transportation, the presence of guards, and the degree of difficulty entailed in accessing certain offices and individuals once at the gate also offered insight into who can and is expected to access these institutions and their services.

Participant Populations

While designing my project, my goal was to conduct research among various populations that had varying interests and involvements with jhuggi jhopris, their daily operations, their regulation, their demolition, and their transformation in Delhi. My desire to incorporate these different populations, whom development professionals call stakeholders, stemmed from my desire to produce a more rounded ethnography that holds in tension the understandings and conceptions of poverty, belonging, gender, and citizenship held by the various participant groups that in turn contour their strategies in the complex negotiations for rights to the city.

Jhuggi Jhopri Resident Women

While I wanted to center the lived experiences of women living in the JJ colonies, I had also hoped to recruit some male residents to participate in my study so as to get an understanding of the gender dynamics within particular colonies. However, due to various reasons which I discuss below in the *Positionalities and Challenges in the Field* section of this chapter including the men's work schedules and their lack of interest, I was unable to directly include JJ resident men. However, through my informal visits to Kalandar Colony and Aradhaknagar accompanied by CURE staff and presence during various workshops and community meetings I was able to recruit a total of seventeen women living in those communities. While most of the women were introduced to me by CURE staff, particularly Lalita whose family had lived in Kalandar colony for decades, some women grew curious after seeing me during previous visits and came to introduce themselves and ask about my research. During all of my interactions with the women, I was intentional about speaking in Hindi in an attempt to minimize as much as possible the social and linguistic power differential between them and myself. They were incredibly patient with my imperfect Hindi, for which they offered corrections, and seemed amused by the sight of a foreigner speaking Hindi.[40] Indeed, I believe this negotiation of language helped me to build rapport with my participants. In addition to the seventeen participants, I also had several informal conversations with and conducted participant observation among women residing in other JJ colonies as indicated in the previous section.

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[40] Some of my interviews and all focus groups in Hindi were co-facilitated, translated, and transcribed by my research assistant Kanika Gupta, who is fluent in English and a native Hindi speaker. I was introduced to her through the USIEF (Fulbright) office in Delhi.

NGO Workers

The second research population group for my study included NGO staff working with JJ communities in Delhi. Because I worked most closely with CURE, I was able to recruit staff members from different levels of the organizational structure including "field staff" who work on the ground inside particular JJ communities handling the daily activities of the organization, regional managers who oversee the organization's activities within several JJ colonies grouped by proximity, as well as the director of the organization. The Center for Urban Regional Excellence (CURE) is a development NGO working primarily in Delhi and Agra with poor urban communities to improve their access to basic resources, services, and livelihoods. Often, the NGO functions as a liaison between particular JJ communities and local government.[41] Additionally, I was able to conduct interviews with administrators at the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), an NGO based in Delhi and working throughout India which uses participatory research, knowledge dissemination, and advocacy as primary tools to "empower marginalized communities and women."[42] While the overarching mission of this NGO is very broad, some of their initiatives were of particular interest to this study, specifically those projects addressing issues of safety for women and girls as well as access to basic resources and services. In total, I was able to recruit five NGO workers as research participants.

Bureaucrats & Planners

The final research population group for this study included officials working for the three major government agencies currently involved in the administration and regulation of JJ colonies, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), and the recently established Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB); as well as urban planners

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[41] <www.cureindia.org>
[42] <www.pria.org>

either presently or historically involved in government initiatives to revitalize or resettle jhuggi jhopris. In addition to interviewing five government officials and planners, I was also able to have informal conversations and conduct participant observation among planners and officials during a two-week workshop on slum resettlement discussed previously in this chapter. I also conducted participant observation at an event sponsored by the School of Planning and Architecture (SPA) titled *People Building Better Cities: Understanding Urban Informality* in which urban planners and NGO workers shared and analyzed international examples of initiatives that had successfully incorporated the needs and perceptions of urban poor populations into city planning.[43]

While I've presented the various research populations here as distinct groups for clarity, I must also note that the distinctions were messier in real life. There were NGO workers who were also JJ residents, NGO workers who had previously been government bureaucrats, government officials who were also urban planners, and a few JJ residents who were employed by the DDA. And while particular aspects of their identities may have had more salience in particular contexts and times such as participating in my study; it is important to remember that they are informed by all aspects of their identities and experiences. Additionally, I note that while I offered all participants the option to appear under pseudonyms, all chose to be identified by their real names. Several JJ women in particular were adamant about being accurately identified and insisted they observe me writing down their names to ensure they wouldn't be forgotten or misidentified. Similarly, while I offered my participants the option to meet away from their institutions or JJCs in order to ensure privacy, none were interested in doing so. Indeed, most of my research participants seemed either confused by or dismissive of my concerns around privacy and preferred to meet in the convenience of their offices or homes.

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[43] Forum took place on October 4, 2013 as the opening event for a twelve day showing of an international traveling exhibit of the same name on the main SPA campus in New Delhi, India

Research Methods

Knowledge emerges out of a complex interplay of social, cognitive, cultural, institutional and situational elements. It is, therefore, always essentially provisional, partial and contextual in nature, and people work with a multiplicity of understandings, beliefs and commitments.

Norman Long (2004:15)

My research questions[44] and methods were designed to explore what it means to *legitimately belong* in Delhi, particularly as a poor woman living in perpetual precariousness. As such, I attempted to put into conversation narratives and understandings of citizenship, Indian womanhood, and belonging presented by bureaucrats, urban planners, and NGO workers, with that of JJ resident women through examinations of formal interactions, mundane activities, and moments of heightened tension. In this approach, I was particularly influenced by Norman Long's scholarship on development interventions and what he calls an "actor-oriented analysis of development" in which the researcher must understand the world-views, knowledge bases, and intentions of the various actors in a given development intervention and analyze the various points of interaction or "social interfaces" between these actors in which the various perspectives and interests are negotiated and contested and in-turn shape how an intervention or policy manifests in practice (2004: 15-16). Through the use of well-established methodologies including individual and small-group interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, along with analyses of archival records and contemporary print media, I attempted to answer my overarching research questions.

Interviews

I conducted ten individual semi-structured interviews with government bureaucrats, city planners, and NGO workers that lasted between 45 minutes and two hours each. These interviews were designed to gather both institutional approaches on JJ residents and JJC interventions as well

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[44] For an explicit articulation of my overarching research questions, see chapter 1.

as personal perspectives on the same. They incorporated discussions of particular projects and organizational goals along with the career and personal histories of the participants and their approaches to JJ communities. The majority of my interviews with bureaucrats and planners were conducted inside the participants' office or living room over cups of chai. In contrast, interviews with NGO field staff were conducted in transit, often while walking through JJ clusters or from one JJ colony to another. During these walking interviews, participants sometimes stopped to point out particular resources in a community such as water taps or community toilets or particular problem areas such as clogged sewage drains or *nalas*.

I also conducted five informal small group interviews that lasted between one and one-and-a-half hours with JJ resident women. The "group" aspect of these interviews emerged organically rather than by design. In each instance, I arrived at the JJC around 10am to meet with particular women who had indicated they were available to be interviewed after their morning chores. The women then invited me to sit with them either in front of their home or on the rooftop terrace, often while they dried their hair in the morning sun. Soon after we began our interviews, the women would stop to call over a neighbor women or two who were walking by or themselves drying their hair and ask them to join the conversation. In this manner, what were initially designed to be individual interviews became small group interviews often consisting of 2 or 3 women. Russell Bernard (2013) notes that it is common in close knit communities for other members to "insert themselves" in what the researcher imagines to be a private interview and that in such cases an insistence on privacy from the researcher might be taken negatively by the participants (198). Correspondingly, I did not insist on privacy since it was always the participant who had invited her neighbors and clearly wanted to include them in the discussion. Moreover, these small group

settings proved particularly useful in observing the natural discourse among the neighbor women on the various issues they faced as residents of a particular JJC.

Focus Groups

I also conducted three focus groups among women residents in Kalandar Colony and Aradhaknagar consisting of six to eight members and lasting about ninety minutes each. Similar to the small group interviews discussed above, focus groups remove the pressure of a one-on-one interview and allow participants to share perceptions of common experiences (Krueger & Casey 2000:4). Indeed, many of the focus group participants were also part of the small group interviews. However, unlike within the small group interview setting, while the women participating in my focus groups all lived in the same JJCs, they were not all friends and at times disagreed strongly on what they considered the most important issues they faced or how they should be handled. Moreover, the focus group setting seemed to allow the women to freely criticize certain aspects of previous and ongoing NGO projects in their communities and some took that opportunity to question an NGO staff member who had accompanied me about what they felt were the organization's shortcomings. I initially debated having Lalita, who worked for CURE, serve as my co-facilitator for the focus groups due to concerns of power differentials and potentially hindering open and honest discussions about the NGO in her presence. However, ultimately the fact that she is also a resident of Kalandar Colony, younger than most of the participants, and my observations of the ways other resident women interacted with her led to my decision to include her as her presence did not appear to hinder the active participation of the focus group participants.

Document Analysis

<u>Archival Data</u>

I employed this method primarily in the examination of publically available government records, particularly those documents outlining various policies and initiatives directed at slums and JJCs. Considering the complexity of the Indian state's history with slum and JJC policy, archival research helped to establish a broad timeline of the major policy shifts and state interventions as well as to keep track of jurisdictional shifts over slums and JJCs between government agencies such as the DDA, MCD, and DUSIB. Moreover, I used a historical examination of these policy documents to outline the shifting characterizations of both JJCs and their residents and a corresponding shift in the policies themselves. To a lesser extent, I examined narratives about slum and JJ communities presented by local NGOs through their websites and published reports.

<u>Print Media</u>

Upon moving in to my flat in Delhi, I subscribed to the Times of India, an English language newspaper which was delivered to my door daily. In addition to the fact that my landlord was a lifetime subscriber of the newspaper and thus could conveniently facilitate my subscription, I chose the TOI because it has been in publication for over 150 years and has one of the highest circulations for a daily newspaper in India (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 2016). Moreover, while it is a national paper, it is published in Delhi and contains a dedicated section titled the *Delhi Times*. And while most middle-class people I met in India had strong generational loyalties to specific newspapers, the TOI seemed to have a general reputation as a serious and intelligent publication, if not a particularly radical or critical one. All of these aspects made it a good avenue to explore popular rhetoric surrounding JJ rehabilitation and demolition, as well as women's empowerment, particularly among the city's English speaking middle and upper classes. To this end, I read the

paper every day and clipped relevant articles which I then sorted and analyzed for theme, content, and tone. I identified both overt discussions of belonging, citizenship, and "appropriate" gender performance as well as more implicit signaling of the same particularly in articles about JJ demolition, resettlement, and women's safety. I then used this data to find common threads and recurring narratives.

Participant Observation

Finally, as with most ethnographies, participant observation was an essential component of my research. As indicated in previous sections of this chapter, I was able to conduct participant observation among urban planners during a two week workshop on resettlement, through attending a city planner and NGO panel on building inclusive cities, as well as attending various NGO led workshops for JJ residents on sanitation, maternal health, and education. I was also able to join NGO staff on routine visits to JJ communities, attend protests against the demolition of Kathputli colony, and converse with JJ resident women while they completed their morning chores. Gatherings of planners and NGO workers illustrated the ways in which those groups tend to talk to each other about JJ residents and urban poor populations through their use of jargon and short-hand to signal shared understandings of the lives of JJ residents and the common issues they face. Alternatively, attending NGO led workshops and anti-demolition protests allowed me to observe "social interfaces" between JJ residents with NGO workers and government agents. Through these interactions, I was able to observe how NGO workers' and government agents' perceptions of JJ residents, JJ residents' understandings of said people, and each of their understandings of citizenship and rights were expressed and at times contested on the ground. For instance, attendance of NGO led training workshops allowed me to observe how the struggles faced by JJ residents are narrativized and presented by NGO workers back to JJ residents as problems to be

tackled through individual effort and collective action. In addition to these specific instances of participant observation, were of course the ongoing observations and insights I gleaned from using various forms of public transportation, shopping in local bazaars, eating and drinking at roadside *dhabas* and chai stalls, and generally living in Delhi particularly in the months surrounding the 2013 local elections.

Figure 4: *Poster at SPA PBBC workshop*

Positionalities and Challenges in the Field

Beyond the technical details of my research methods, the various bureaucratic and political realities that helped determine my research sites and access to particular social networks and populations for research, and the ways in which my research questions emerged and transformed throughout my pre-dissertation and dissertation fieldwork; there were also particular aspects of my

identity and social positioning that played a significant role in both the ways in which I approached and conducted my study as well as in the ways that research participants perceived and engaged with me. As many feminist and post-structural scholars have asserted, there is an essential need to acknowledge the subjective and embodied nature of all research and data production (Collins (1991); Harding (1991); Haraway (1988)). Both as researchers and research participants, our identities and social positions are multi-faceted and intersectional (Crenshaw 1991). Moreover, various aspects of our identities and social positions have more salience in particular times and contexts, even when interacting with the same people.

As such, it is difficult for me to reduce my position to a particular set of identities that would encompass all of my fieldwork. While I cannot discount the general position of power and privilege I occupied as a Fulbright funded ethnographer from America, and as a researcher who would ultimately decide which participants' perspectives to include and how to interpret the data I collected; the fact that several of my research participants occupied positions of political and institutional power or were senior scholars, meant that within the context of those interactions the position of power was held by my participants. Similarly, as a relatively young and unmarried woman within the cultural context of India, my interactions with older participants across social and economic strata, and gender always included an expectation of deference on my part and at times mimicked the communication patterns of youth with family elders or older mentors. I will note however, that when interacting with older JJ resident women participants, there was often a reciprocal deference for my level of education and seeming independence as they compared me to their own daughters and the aspirations they had for them, which was not present in my interactions with other older participants. While I give the above examples to briefly point to the individual variation within the broader narrative of the position of power held by 'Western' ethnographers

conducting research in the global south; below I will offer some illustrative examples of instances in which particular aspects of my identity and social positioning emerged to shape certain ethnographic encounters and my overall ways of *being* and *moving* within the field.

"But aren't you afraid of being raped?"

I first came across a characterization of Delhi as "the rape capital of India" in 2011 while working on a research paper titled *Popular Conceptions of Feminism and Women's Empowerment in Contemporary India* for an advanced Hindi language course I was taking in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Presuming this characterization was just one journalist's use of hyperbole, I began asking all of my instructors and local friends if they had ever heard Delhi described as India's rape capital and was surprised to find that they were all very familiar with the moniker. This also held true for colleagues and other scholars of India whom I spoke with once I returned to the U.S. Upon further research, I found that national crime statistics have indeed consistently shown that reported incidences of rape and other violent crimes against women in Delhi far outnumber those in other Indian cities (National Crime Records Bureau 2010 & 2013). It was thus with full awareness of this disproportional violence against women in Delhi, and in part troubled and moved by it, that I chose Delhi as the location of my study. Nevertheless, in January of 2013, as I prepared for my comprehensive exams in anticipation of beginning my fieldwork the following summer, the story of the horrific 'Nirbhaya' gang-rape a month prior in Delhi and the accompanying public outcry had become major international news. Upon hearing about my impending fieldwork, everyone from casual acquaintances to close family and friends would invariably ask some iteration of the question "Aren't you afraid of being raped?" Some friends started sending me news reports of sexual assaults in Delhi or other parts of India, and I found myself downplaying the danger of moving to Delhi alone as a young woman in conversations with various people. The truth of the

matter is, I wasn't scared. At least, I didn't realize that I was. Having spent a total of eight months of the preceding three years living in India, two of those months living alone in Delhi and having been aware of the sexual assault rates long before the Nirbhaya attack, I felt I knew how to minimize my risk of assault as much as possible. Looking back, I think this was a defense mechanism that allowed me to maintain the illusion of control. After all, I'm well aware of how problematic it is to place the onus of rape prevention on the victim instead of the assailant. Nevertheless, the following September, armed with law-enforcement grade pepper spray and a list of rules that included never travelling alone or on public transportation after dark, I moved to Delhi.

Once I arrived in Delhi, with the help of the local Fulbright office, I found a one bedroom apartment in the upper-middle class neighborhood of GKI in South Delhi. My apartment was the top floor of a small three-story residential building. The floor below me was occupied by Mr. Nehru, a retired employee of the U.S. –India Educational Foundation (USIEF, which houses the local Fulbright program) and his wife. The ground floor was occupied by their daughter and her family. This set-up was important to my sense of security because it gave me the sense of living and being associated with a respected family that had been living in the neighborhood for decades. And while my separate apartment entrance provided me with independence, I quickly became recognizable in the neighborhood as "the Nehrus' guest." Moreover, both the building and the residential complex were gated and had a guard hired by the Resident Welfare Association to walk around late at night and keep watch. All of these things added to my feeling of security, even while I critiqued the growing trend of gated communities in Indian cities and the exclusionary and criminalizing effects that they often have on poorer residents of the city.

Despite the almost daily news reports of sexual assault, I moved around Delhi with a general feeling of security. Nevertheless, I was acutely aware of the need to be cautious due to the ongoing popular discourse around women's safety throughout the city. Indeed part of my data collection was on this particular subject. As such, I made sure to schedule all of my interviews and visits to JJ clusters during the daytime and traveled primarily via metro exclusively utilizing the "women only" cars on each train. The ability to determine my own schedule and the financial freedom to choose particular modes of transportation gave me the unique privilege of avoiding places and contexts that I felt were physically dangerous, unlike most of the women who participated in my study. Yet, while limiting my time in the field provided me a certain level of security, it also restricted my access to particular segments of research populations and thus impacted the data I was able to collect. For instance, while I had hoped to include JJ resident men in my study to gain a richer insight into gender dynamics within a given cluster as well as within particular households, I was unable to do so because the vast majority of men living within the communities I visited left early in the morning for work and did not return until late in the evening. Similarly, many of the JJ resident women who were domestic workers left around sunrise to make it in time to prepare breakfast for their employers and didn't return until after serving dinner. This meant that the JJ residents who participated in my study were almost entirely women who either worked from home doing piecemeal sewing and handicraft work for area factories, worked within the JJ cluster, or had grown children who provided the household income and thus did not leave home to work. The few men who were around the JJ clusters during the daytime, with the exception of one elderly Pradhan, were uninterested in participating once they realized I had little to offer in return in terms of compensation and was interested in "women's issues."

It wasn't until half-way through my fieldwork that I actually experienced the feeling of physical insecurity and fear. In mid-January, I got lost on my way to an event featuring Gloria Steinem in Central Delhi. Starting at around 5 O'clock in winter, I was already going against my rule of never traveling alone after dark. After several attempts to figure out the exact location of the bookstore venue based on my written directions, I began asking directions from people on the street. Following half an hour of conflicting directions and walking around in circles, I was frustrated and on the verge of tears when I realized that I had started to draw a crowd consisting of several young men offering me directions. At this point it was fully dark with the exception of the street lamps, and wanting to avoid any possible trouble in case the young men's intentions weren't as benevolent as they implied, I jumped into the first auto-rickshaw I saw. Thankfully the driver, who was a grey bearded Sikh gentleman, recognized the bookstore I was looking for and graciously accepted me as a fare despite the fact that the bookstore was less than a kilometer away and thus a trip that most *autowallahs* would refuse. I think he must have seen how flustered and upset I was.

Still, it wasn't until the next morning while I was reading the newspaper that the real panic and fear set-in. On the front page of the Times of India was a headline that read "Danish woman gang-raped for 3 hours in heart of city" (Shekhar 2014). According to this article, a Danish tourist had been lost and asking for directions when some men pushed her off the road and took turns raping her for three hours. This had started two hours before I arrived on that same street, also lost and asking for directions merely two blocks away. In fact, she was still being assaulted while I was walking around in circles and being approached by a group of men. It's difficult for me to express how terrified I was reading that article and realizing how easily that could have been me. I locked myself in my apartment for the rest of the day alternating between tears and feelings of

intense rage and frustration. Sara Ahmed (2004), while discussing the affective politics of fear, asserts that fear and anticipation of a future injury "is itself a form of violence in the present" that shapes women's bodies and how they use them through feelings of vulnerability, and thus works to limit their mobility within public space and pushes them instead to occupy enclosed or private space (70). This is perhaps the most apt description of my visceral response to hide in my apartment following the attack of the un-named Danish woman. Moreover, it became an important way for me to understand the impact of the ongoing narrative of feminine vulnerability in public space on the women who had to navigate that space daily.

"Where are your people from?"

Although I was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to an Eritrean mother and an Ethiopian father; outside the context of East Africa, people throughout my life have often had a hard time identifying my ethnicity. While it seems clear that I am a woman of color, I've often been assumed to be Afro-Latina or South Asian both by people of those ethnicities as well as people of other ethnicities. This apparent ambiguity of my ethnic background to certain people became significant within the context of my fieldwork and in terms of living in India in general. At some point during my initial conversations with people in India, including research participants, I would inevitably get asked the question "where are your people from?" And while some would take my answer at face value after mentioning that they had thought I was Indian, others would ask about the details of my family history insisting that I had to have some South Asian heritage in my background.

During my initial visits to India for language training and predissertation research, I wore my hair chemically straightened, and this coupled with my generically "wheatish" complexion and my growing Hindi language skills often led people I encountered to assume that I was a non-resident Indian, or NRI for short. Indeed, many people even saw my wider nose with a right-sided

nose-ring and thicker hair as apparently more Dravidian, and specifically asked if I was Malayali or Tamil. While I was always honest about my background with anyone I met and conversed with personally or professionally, the assumption that I was of Indian descent often helped me in my daily interactions with *autowallahs* and store keepers in bazaars. Moreover, I had the convenience of inconspicuousness. While my identifiably non-Indian friends and colleagues in India often got stares, requests for photos, and "tourist prices" in the markets and for auto-rickshaw rides; I got no more attention than other young Indian women in those same spaces. This was less notable in the particularly cosmopolitan spaces of Delhi such as Khan Market or Connaught Place, but helpful when visiting JJ clusters, resettlement sites in the peripheries of the city, or traveling via public transportation.

By the time I moved to Delhi in 2013 to begin my dissertation fieldwork, I had stopped straightening my hair and my kinky curls seemed to confuse a lot of people, although it didn't preclude most people I spoke with from still assuming I was of Indian descent. It did, however, draw a lot more attention than I was used to; and in fact I had multiple conversations, often with middle-aged men I encountered in public, on how I got my hair to stay in two-strand twists. One of these conversations was notably an extensive discussion on the technical details of hair twisting with an armed guard at the gate of the Taj Mahal in Agra. The women I encountered often just stared at my hair and whispered amongst themselves. In an attempt to minimize the attention I was receiving, I regularly wore my hair hidden under a snood or dupatta while conducting research.

However, perhaps what was more important to my experience of living in Delhi was not who most people perceived me to be but rather who they *didn't* perceive me to be: African. It became clear early in my fieldwork that there was a popular narrative that characterized Nigerians in particular, and Africans in general who were living in Indian cities as engaged in drug trafficking

and prostitution. I came across several newspaper articles discussing the "growing problem" of Nigerian drug gangs in the country as well as particular stories in the media of Nigerians being apprehended while transporting large quantities of drugs (Unnithan & Vij-Aurora (2013); NDTV (2013); Zee News (2013)). Not only did this cast a shadow of criminality upon the large Nigerian community living throughout India, but also upon other Africans in India who were seldom differentiated by their country of origin.

In early 2014, during the now infamous forty-nine day Aam Aadmi Party control of Delhi Government after the historic December 2013 elections, the newly elected Law Minister Somnath Bharti led a late-night vigilante raid into the apartment of four Ugandan women living in the Khirki Extension neighborhood of South Delhi (where many Africans live) accusing them of running a drug and sex-trafficking racket. Bharti claimed that several "concerned local residents" (i.e. Indian) of the neighborhood had come to him after their previous complaints to various law-enforcement and government branches alleging drug and sex trafficking by the "foreigners" had been ignored. When the police officers he had called refused to conduct the raid, later saying they had no evidence of the crimes alleged and thus no legal justification to enter, Bharti and the assembled crowd of local complainants (seemingly all men) took it upon themselves to conduct the raid. The four Ugandan woman later described being grabbed and verbally threatened by the mob, and being taken to a nearby hospital where Bharti and his companions insisted the women be given a drug test.

While the exact incidents of the evening remain under contention from both sides, the xenophobic narratives of criminal and immoral foreigners infiltrating the neighborhoods of decent middle-class Indians and corrupting and endangering their families became a common refrain both on the part of the Law Minister as well as within debates in the media and public discourse. In fact,

during a visit to a JJ colony in Northeast Delhi, I heard one of the resident women bringing up the incident and corresponding scandal, saying it was an example of "people" (presumably from other political parties) just trying to remove AAP members like Bharti from power who were only looking out for the safety of "common people" like her. Following this incident, reading and hearing accounts of the consistent harassment and discrimination experienced by fellow Africans living in Delhi made me realize my uniquely positive experience as an African in the city. I also recognized that my perceived ethnic ambiguity, and more importantly my perceived *non-African* identity had shielded me from xenophobic attacks and quite possibly given me access to participants and spaces that I might not have had were I identifiably African in India.

"You're all the same!"

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not examine my position as an outsider and a researcher within the specific context of JJ clusters and in relation to JJ residents. In contrast to the other participant populations in my study, JJ residents have a unique history of being targets of outside intervention in the forms of enumeration and study by government agencies and academics, as well as being the objects of various governmental and NGO schemes and projects designed to transform their lives in different ways. As a result, I was only the latest in a long line of outsiders coming to their communities asking questions about their daily lives and experiences. This in turn shaped our ethnographic encounters in several ways. Having been repeatedly asked questions about problems they faced living in a JJ colony, for instance, many had a common batch of complaints to list off and had preconceived ideas about what they thought I was interested in hearing about or seeing. I often had to ask about mundane details several times before they were convinced I actually wanted to hear about them.

But perhaps more important to examine is the power dynamics at play during their interactions with outsiders such as myself. While what is at stake during said interactions varies depending on the particular social or political power held by the outsider, ultimately it is always the JJ residents who are at risk of being exploited or worse, losing their homes. For instance, "socio-economic surveys" commissioned by government agencies are used to determine eligibility for various housing resettlement and "upgradation" schemes. Because of this, my presence was received with learned skepticism. They wanted to know what I was going to do for them if they shared their stories with me. Once they realized I had no institutional resources, like that of an NGO, to invest in their communities, some residents asked how I was any different from the researchers and government surveyors who had come before me. I answered as honestly as I could and told them there was very little I could do for them in terms of improving their living conditions or securing land tenure. And while I could not speak for the researchers who came before me, I hoped to incorporate their perspectives as much I could through my research and the resulting dissertation. I don't know if my answer was satisfactory, however, many of the residents I spoke with ultimately chose to participate.

The Elephant in the Room: Addressing Religion among Participants

As illustrated in Chapter 1, the significance of religion and caste on contemporary social relations in India cannot be overstated. Aside from the periodic recurrence of violent events such as 1984 Sultanpuri riots, the 1992-3 Babri Masjid riots, and the 2002 Ahmedabad riots, there remain ongoing popular debates about caste reservations[45] and the recent ascension of the BJP on

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[45] In 1980 the Mandal Commission, a government appointed commission, released a report that recommended the implementation of extensive "reservations" or "quotas" for lower caste people in government jobs and public universities in an attempt to redress caste discrimination. Following attempts by Prime Minister (at the time) V.P. Singh to implement these recommendations in 1989, there were widespread debates and protests against the proposed policies. Although certain aspects of the reservation recommendation have been implemented, they remain a widely debated issue. (See Srinavas (1996) for further discussions).

the national political stage[46] and its Hindu nationalist rhetoric make religion and religious identity clearly relevant in the contemporary Indian context. In Kalandar Colony and during my brief visits to Jhilmil for instance, I found that the only open "public" spaces large enough for group gatherings were in the courtyards attached to the Hindu temples built by residents. As a result, casual meetings between residents and NGO staff were by default held in these courtyards. While my NGO contacts assured me that everyone was aware that the location was due to necessity and that the NGO meetings were secular, I wondered how non-Hindu residents perceived these meetings and if their location impacted the participation of said residents. Indeed, the majority of the JJ residents in my primary field sites were Hindu, as were the women who participated in my study, so I was unable to ask these questions myself. However, my attempts at discussing the impacts of religious identity with my JJ resident participants on their daily lives was repeatedly dismissed in favor of conversations about the impacts of material poverty instead. While my research participants at times casually referred to celebrations of certain religious festivals within their JJCs and occasionally used references to Hindu gods or religious stories as allegories of experiences in their own lives, they were not interested in discussing their own religious identities with me. Interestingly, I had found in my routine social interactions outside of the JJCs that discussions of religion were generally not uncommon or avoided as they might be in the United States. Yet, this was not the case in the context of my research with JJ residents. I imagine my identity as a foreigner was relevant in this regard, as were ongoing governmental efforts to disavow the impacts of caste identity in contemporary and "modern" India. Nevertheless, my inability to effectively engage my

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[46] During the 2014 General Elections held April-May, the BJP and its allied groups won the majority of votes and replaced the Indian National Congress Party at the Helm. As a result, Narandra Modi, former Chief Minister of Gujarat and member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang (RSS) who was implicated in the 2002 religious riots in Ahmedabad, became the 15th Prime Minister of India.

participants in discussions of religious identity meant that primary data based discussions on this

topic are very limited in this dissertation.

Chapter 3: Intersections of Class and Womanhood

In this chapter, I examine how dominant middle-class discourses on women's safety and broader notions of gender and Indian womanhood bear upon the relationship of the state with its women citizens. Particularly, I explore how these constructions of Indian womanhood and narratives of safety inform the structure of initiatives meant to 'empower' women and markedly gendered public policies in Delhi more broadly, and illustrate the ways in which they fail to address the needs and experiences of poor JJ resident women. To this end, I first analyze the narrative construction of "the Delhi woman" within the city's shared imaginary as well as a broader exploration of conceptualizations of womanhood, and the function of these notions within a growing discourse on women's rights in Delhi. Here I draw on theorizations of 'frames of recognition,' 'bare life,' and 'exception' to analyze the ways in which dominant discourses of "womanhood" exclude poor JJ resident women and thus limit their ability to successfully make gendered claims on the state for protections. I then shift towards a historically situated discussion of acute versus structural violence to distinguish between the spectacle of rape for the middle-class centered by the state and the everyday forms of constraint and coercion that characterize the lives of JJ resident women which go largely ignored within dominant discourses on "women's issues." Expanding on the latter, I analyze the ways in which the lived experiences of poor women living in jhuggi jhopris are shaped by their intersecting gender and socio-economic identities within a bureaucratic matrix. Finally, I turn towards an analysis of the transformational effects of the 2012 Nirbhaya Attack on the social and political landscape of the city, highlighting certain changes in government policy and legislation as well as prominent themes in public discourse and mainstream media. I do so to highlight the general condition of precariousness shared by all women in Delhi,

while simultaneously pointing to the ways in which these recent shifts within the city's political landscape continue to marginalize JJ resident women.

Who is the *Delhi Woman?*

Throughout my stay in Delhi, *Times of India* ran two recurring and at times simultaneous sections in its daily publication titled "Women under attack" and "Women in charge" which alternatively chronicled instances of sexual violence and harassment experienced by women in India and profiles of successful (chiefly corporate) Indian women who were apparently breaking "glass-ceilings" and paving the way for a gender-equitable work force. While each section presented a starkly divergent image of the lives of "contemporary Indian women," they nonetheless both centered primarily on the experiences of middle-class women living in cities. Other segments of the *TOI,* noticeably lacking either of the above headings, chronicled the recurring violence experienced by domestic workers at the hands of their (often middle-class women) employers as well as the few instances of JJ resident women running for local political office. While university students and other young middle-class women in the city were organizing protests against women's hostel curfews, meeting to sleep in parks, and organizing "Slut Walks" to reclaim their rights to occupy public spaces at any hour; JJ resident women I spoke with told me of their frustrations with the lack of safe and adequate public toilets for their daughters, the skyrocketing food prices, and having to sleep in makeshift tents in a park after their home was demolished by the government. I present these seemingly disparate struggles experienced by those occupying different socio-economic positions not to establish a hierarchy of problems or to diminish the importance of some, but rather to explore the questions of who is recognized as the "Delhi woman" and what counts as "women's issues" in Delhi's public imaginary. These

definitions are significant because they inform *which* women are able to successfully make claims on the state to address *what* issues.

On March 8, 2014, in celebration of International Women's Day, several major companies led by the publication *Navbharat Times*[47] and sponsored by popular scooter and motorcycle brands Hero and Harley Davidson India, jointly organized an "all women bike rally" to occur simultaneously in thirteen cities across India including Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Kolkata. In the days leading up to the rally, the *TOI* ran a full page advertisement for the event featuring two young Indian women dressed in fitted jeans torn at the knees, tank tops, and aviator sunglasses. One of the women also wore a leather jacket, and each woman sat astride a scooter—one a Hero Xtreme Sports model, and the other a Hero Pleasure model, which was often marketed as a "light and zippy scooter for girls." Above the women's heads in what looked like pealing black paint, was text in bold letters urging "Ride the Winds of Change." Beneath the photograph was text that changed as the day of the event neared. On March 7, the day before the rally it read as follows:

> **Let's Create History this 8th March.**
> The Indian woman is not the same anymore. Today she is her own boss who makes her own choices and carves her own path. And in celebration of that spirit, NBT brings you India's first ever All Women Bike Rally on March 8. So come on, get on your bike and participate, or just join in and cheer on. Be there.

On the day of the rally, March 8, it read as follows:

> **Let's Create History Today!**
> It's time to ride the winds of change, time to be you, it's time for steely determination, time to change things truly,
> Now no one will get in your way, or slow down your pace,
> Now no shackle, chain or bond will hold you back,
> When your engine roars and you take on the road,
> So come on girls, it's your time to be!

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[47] Navbharat times is one of the largest circulating Hindi language newspapers in Mumbai and Delhi and is published by Bennett Coleman & Co. Ltd, the parent company that also published the Times of India, The Economic Times, and Maharashtra Times.

In the bottom corner, next to the times and locations of the rally by city,[48] was a graphic logo of a woman riding on a motorcycle beneath an arched banner that read All Women Bike Rally, with the Hero Pleasure and NBT logos bordering the graphic above and below respectively. Beneath all of that were the words "Kabhi Rukna Nahin" [Never Stop] in bold all-capital letters. The narrative of the contemporary Indian woman in these ads is clear. She is urban, "modern" [read: westernized], middle or upper class, able bodied, independent, and free to do as she pleases. She has her own mode of transportation, perhaps a career, and can presumably traverse public space dressed in fitted and torn jeans and a tank top without fear of consequence. While certain characteristics of this imagined "new Indian woman" are familiar, taken as a whole she bears little resemblance to the vast majority of women one encounters in Delhi. Certainly, there are many students and working women who use scooters to travel throughout Delhi, but they are rarely wearing revealing clothing, more likely donning salwar suits or the more westernized kurta and jeans combo, along with the ubiquitous *dupatta*—the widely recognized symbol of modesty and *izzat* [honor]. Similarly, the women who choose to wear tight fitting or revealing clothes are often those privileged with private cars that can transport them from their homes to the relative safety of guarded and exclusionary "semi-public" spaces such as high-end pubs and restaurants. Indeed, they would never come to the public bazaars of Old Delhi and Sarojini Nagar, or utilize the city bus dressed thusly.

The level of "freedom" implied by these ads, wherein a woman "carves her own path" with nothing and no one to "hold [her] back," is unattainable even to the city's otherwise privileged

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[48] Interestingly, the Delhi rally kicked off at the DLF Saket Mall, the same shopping complex where Jyoti Singh (a.k.a Nirbhaya) and her friend went to watch a movie and afterwards had trouble finding public transportation resulting in their boarding an off-duty private charter bus with their would-be assailants the night of the now infamous attack.

women. Yet even if we take this narrative presented by the ads as an aspirational ideal, similar to the images presented in Bollywood movies—that draws on, yet exaggerates the lives of real women to offer a potential reality with expanded freedoms— it's clear that the narrativized "new Indian woman" remains alien to the poor woman who lives in a JJC or the housemaid who walks or takes a cycle rickshaw to work every morning. Indeed, despite the ongoing public discourse about the growing empowerment of women in Delhi, the women I spoke with living in the Aradhaknagar JJC dismissed such claims as the grumblings of men. During a group discussion with several women, a long-time resident of the JJC in her mid-sixties named Krishna-ji[49] chuckled when I asked her what she thought of all the talk around town about women's new found "*shakti [power]*" to make decisions in their lives and told me, "See the gents will speak like that... that the woman today has a lot of power. In every house men say that. And what power has she got...especially the poor one? They squeeze her anywhere!"

Nevertheless, the *New Indian Woman* narrative persisted and thrived in Delhi's public discourse. A shining example of this was the *TOI* weekly segment titled "Women in Charge," which spotlighted the stories of various successful Indian women predominately working in the corporate sector. These were consistently stories of triumph wherein the women were able to overcome obstacles through sheer determination, confidence, and hard work. The headlines, which read like platitudes, were direct quotes taken from the women being interviewed, and included the following: "I've never stopped and I don't know how" (01/06/14); "Never feel that you are different from men" (01/20/14); "Don't let marital life decide your career" (02/10/14); "Fear sets

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[49] "-ji" is a Hindi honorific suffix often added to names when addressing elders or other individuals to denote respect. While the age of the women who participated in my study varied, there were certain older individuals ubiquitously addressed using this suffix throughout the community, such as Krishna-ji. While I addressed all individuals who were my elders using this honorific during my personal interactions, for the purpose of this dissertation, I only use the suffix when referencing those individuals whom I never heard addressed without it.

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in if you don't grab opportunities" (03/03/14); "Men will [sic] see you as equals until you behave like one" (04/14/14). While several of the women mention that it was difficult to resume their careers after taking time off to have children or point to policy changes in their companies that have made balancing work and family easier, the primary factor of each woman's success is consistently presented as her own ambition and hard work. In one article, the head of India's second largest mortgage lending company insists that hard work alone guarantees success claiming "I don't remember a time when I was not treated equally as a woman. On the contrary people would laugh and say 'why can't people think like you? Like a woman'" (Dhamija 2014). Similarly, another woman, the head of global transaction banking at an international bank, insists "Capability is gender neutral. It will be recognized and rewarded. The first few times you will have to prove yourself, and then your reputation precedes you" (VK & Zechariah 2014b).

Conversely, those who recognize that women face particular challenges in the corporate workplace or that certain jobs or positions have been inaccessible to women nevertheless tended to either minimize the challenges or historicize them as issues which no longer exist. One stock broker states, "challenges are short-term and last until you can mentally overcome them" (VK & Zachariah 2014c), while an executive director of a life insurance company admits that women's careers may not go as fast as their male counterparts since they aren't part of the "old boys network," but ultimately insists, "such issues iron out eventually, as at the end of the day everybody is assessed on their performance" (VK & Zachariah 2013c); and the vice-chairman of a Swiss investment bank proclaims, "Discrimination against women is a thing of the past, but overcoming preconceived biases is a gradual process" (VK & Zachariah 2013a).

Yet, perhaps more damaging than the persistent illusion of gender-blind meritocracy is the consistent shifting of responsibility for unequal treatment or the inaccessibility of upward mobility

for women to the women themselves, reminiscent of the victim blaming characteristic of global rape culture. Ignoring common narratives that often characterize working mothers as "bad" mothers for sacrificing time with their children for their careers, one company CEO declares, "In the race to maintain a [work-life] balance, women often go through *self-inflicted* guilt. All you need is to be organized and be good friends with your family" [*emphasis added*] (VK & Zachariah 2014d). Similarly, one COO of a travel company insists that women "defeat themselves" by feeling lesser than their male colleagues and adds, "Women need to get out of that mindset. The world around will change. Men are happy to treat you as equals till [sic] you behave like one" (VK & Zachariah 2014g). Such statements problematically imply that women either *manufacture* challenges or are "asking" to be treated inequitably through their own inferiority complexes.

Notably, while all of these articles eschew any real discussions of institutional sexism and patriarchy in favor of "bootstraps" narratives of success, the overwhelming majority of the women highlighted emerged from privileged economic and educational backgrounds and many launched their careers within family companies. Thus, while the stories of success presented in these articles are true, the individual articles along with the series as a whole constructs a partial narrative about the overall experiences of women working in corporate settings by downplaying the very real structures that make such success generally inaccessible to most women. Moreover, by consistently presenting these stories broadly as those of women in India's workforce, they erase the experiences of women working in non-corporate settings and the so-called "informal sector" (domestic workers, construction workers, sex workers, etc.) from the popular "modern working woman" trope upon which characterizations of "the *new Indian woman*" is predicated. In one particularly illuminating instance, the same investment bank vice-chairman who declared discrimination of women to be a thing of the past points to a "support system of maids" as integral

to her uninterrupted career after having her first child, stating, "I would drop my son and maid off at [my in-laws] place in the morning and pick them up after work. This helped me focus my energies towards work" (VK & Zachariah 2013a). In this narrative, the maid is presented *not* as a working woman in her own right, but rather as the "support system" which facilitated the vice-chairman's career. Her experiences, like that of other poor or JJ resident women, whose work is not characterized in terms of "careers" or glass-ceilings but more often consists of exhaustive physical labor in an attempt to secure enough income to pay for basic necessities, are thus erased from the dominant narrative of the *Delhi woman*.

Indeed, even in articles where domestic workers and their mistreatment are the seeming subjects, they are still marginalized as (albeit victimized) migrant *others* while their middle-class employers are once again centered. In the autumn of 2013, the media reported on several instances wherein it was revealed that domestic workers in Delhi, mostly young women, were being severely physically and psychologically abused by their middle-class employers. While news of the scandals spread across the city, conversations and media coverage quickly turned to focus on "understanding" and analyzing the abusive employers, who were often quintessential modern, middle-class working "Delhi women." One November 16, 2013 *TOI* article headlined "What turns aam aadmi into a monster at home?" reads thusly:

> The myth that *psychopaths and sociopaths are out there in slums, ghettos, and mental asylums* stands shattered by the frequent reports of brutal torture of maids and domestic servants in middle-class homes. It turns out that the manager next door, the air-hostess in the flat above, or even the doctor across the road could be battering that tribal girl from Jharkhand…It is easier to categorize Jagriti; Vandana Dhir, the senior executive who tortured the Santhal girl in the Vasant Kunj case; Bira Thoibi, the air-hostess who locked up her 12-year old maid; and Aarti Jain of Mayur Vihar, who used to assault her maid, as monsters belonging to another species. It is more painful to acknowledge human potentiality for murderous fury in each of us. [*Emphasis added*] (Shukla 2013)

The article goes on to use psychological studies to analyze how the seemingly "normal" "aam aadmi" [common man] employers could have grown into torturers and abusers, pointing to one of the employers installation of twenty close circuit cameras as a futile attempt at control which inevitably led to her fury when she realized her inability to control her household servants. While the journalist does not attempt to minimize the violence committed by the employers, the sustained attempt at understanding the employers' behavior based on a belief of shared humanity is quite telling. In contrast, the casual reference to the assumption of barbarity among slum residents in the first sentence illustrates the ease with which residents of such poor neighborhoods are excluded from notions of *aam aadmi* [common man] or even humanity.

Similarly, while sympathy is expressed for the women and girls being abused, they are clearly marked as *non-Delhiites* by the use of the descriptors "tribal girl from Jharkhand" and "Santhal girl." Despite the fact that they are [were] residents and workers of Delhi regardless of their ethnic or tribal background, they apparently do not fit the narrative of the modern working *Delhi woman*. Similarly, while violence against women remained at the forefront of public discourse and statistics show that the majority of domestic workers are women (Pandit 2013a), the recurring cases of their abuse was never framed as violence against women or presented under the frequent *TOI* section "Women under attack." Instead, they were framed as issues of trafficking, and non-existent labor laws for domestic workers. While such cases do indeed illuminate the exploitation of workers in the "informal" sector who are particularly vulnerable due to the lack of legal protections and regulation as well as the power differential between such workers and their employers; the almost exclusive framing of these cases in terms of labor regulation also illustrates how poor women are categorized primarily by their economic marginalization along with their male counterparts while narratives of "women's rights" and empowerment are reserved for

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middle-class women. Thus, such narratives also work to exclude poor women from making gendered claims on the state for protections by positioning them as outside the parameters of recognizable women's citizenship.

Therefore I argue that these narratives, circulated through middle-class discourses and popular media, can be understood as epistemological "frames" through which lives of "women" are apprehended as "being." Here I draw on Judith Butler's (2009) theorizations of "frames of recognition" introduced in Chapter 1. By centering the lives of middle-class women and simultaneously erasing or excluding the experiences of poor and JJ resident women, the narratives discussed above 'frame' what constitutes "womanhood" in line with the experiences of the middle-class and render that of poor and JJ women as *unrecognizable*. This recognition, or rather its absence, is critical because as Butler asserts, "specific lives cannot be apprehended as injured or lost if they are not first apprehended as living" (Ibid: 1). The casual reference to slums as the homes of 'psychopaths and sociopaths' and the implicit exclusion of JJ residents from what constitutes *aam aadmi* [common man] in the *TOI* article discussed above illustrates such a frame of recognition that renders poor and JJ resident women as unrecognizable.

Moreover, when these narratives or frames are taken up by the state through its various institutions and representatives, they render poor women as what Agamben (1998) and others have described as 'bare life' or 'killable bodies'—not in the sense of being 'pre-social' or prior to/outside the law per se but rather as having been relegated outside the *protections* of the law and thus 'killable' through a complex legal process (Fitzpatrick (2001); Das & Poole (2004)). Here I follow Das and Poole (2004) in pointing to the 'margins of the state' in the form of 'illegal' JJCs as locations where 'states of exception' emerge through "the continual refounding of law through forms of violence and authority that can be construed as extrajudicial" (13). Specifically, I argue

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that dominant discourses of womanhood that render poor and JJ resident women as 'unrecognizable' ultimately work to 'exceptionalize' or isolate them as outside of the (albeit) restrictive gendered citizenship available to women of higher socio-economic classes because such narratives—which are taken-up and reified by state actors— contour the relationship of the state with its women citizens.

This was evident within many of the protests, (calls for) policy reforms, and popular women's rights activism that emerged in Delhi following the Nirbhaya attacks at the end of 2012[50] which were largely tangential to the daily lives and experiences of women living in Delhi's JJCs or wholly inaccessible to them. For instance, while the passage of the Sexual Harassment of Women in the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act of 2013 was widely heralded as a significant milestone in legislating safer work environments for all women in India and even incorporates a section on domestic workers, the overall framework of redressal within the act is predicated on a corporate/ formal workplace model and is thus very difficult to implement in the context of domestic or "informal" employment. Particularly, while companies with ten or more employees are required to form an internal committee to investigate reports of sexual harassment in the workplace with an external NGO member for oversight, employers of domestic workers have no such mandate. Instead, domestic workers wishing to report such incidents would have to present a written complaint to a district/ municipal level "Local Complaints Committee," who will in turn conduct an investigation that may include the deposition of the parties involved and the gathering of any relevant documentation. The committee may then proceed to either attempt a "conciliation" between the accuser and the accused, award a settlement to the accuser, or refer the case to the police if the reported action legally constitutes a crime according to the

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[50] See sections below for further discussions of these changes

IPC.[51] Beyond the bureaucratic hurdles that may make filing a written complaint against her employer impractical and undesirable for a domestic worker, the very precarious nature of "informal" work such as domestic work and the absence of any protection against wrongful termination for such employees means that filing such a complaint will likely result in the loss of a domestic worker's employment. Moreover, while the Sexual Harassment Act only addresses issues of sexual impropriety in the workplace; the daily issues facing domestic workers in need of redressal go far beyond sexual harassment.

In contrast, one piece of legislation which had the potential for a more direct impact on the daily lives of domestic workers is the Domestic Workers Welfare and Social Security Act drafted by the National Commission of Women (NCW)[52] in 2010. This act requires that all households employing domestic workers, domestic worker placement agencies, and domestic workers register to a local body established for that purpose so as to allow the regulation of such households as workplaces and collect fees to establish a pension/social security fund for domestic workers. Furthermore, this act provides a framework that would establish a legal limit of working hours for both part-time and full-time domestic workers, including specific stipulations about required breaks and holidays, minimum-wage, and overtime pay.[53] However, while the widely publicized instances of domestic worker abuse and torture in 2013 reignited public discussions on the need for legal protections in such contexts, in 2016 the Domestic Workers Welfare and Social Security Act (drafted in 2010) has yet to be enacted into legislation. This illustrates the simultaneous negligence of a significant issue impacting many poor working women in India's cities and the

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[51] See Chapter V (especially sections 10.1, 11.1, & 11.3) of the Sexual Harassment of Women in the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013.

[52] The National Commission of Women is a statutory body mandated to guide the central government on issues facing women.

[53] See Domestic Workers Welfare and Social Security Act, 2010, Chapter Six (especially sections 26.4-7 & 27a)

prioritization of sexual assault in public spaces as the chief 'women's issue' within state policy, reflecting dominant middle-class discourses.

Similarly, while there are consistent cross-cutting issues and themes that persist within public discourses of women's rights in Delhi, such as safety, access to public space, and expanded educational and employment opportunities, the fissures seem to emerge when trying to conceptualize these issues as shared by "women" as a whole while simultaneously attempting to incorporate the ways in which they manifest within the lives of particular (groups of) women. For many of the residents of the Aradhaknagar, Kalandar Colony, and Geeta Colony jhuggi jhopris, the lack of safety is a reality that must be negotiated daily when sending their children to school, when they and their daughters need to use the toilet (particularly after dark), when their toddlers play amidst the trash filled gutters in front of their homes, as well as the ever-present threat of demolitions. During a group conversation about the schools in the area accessible to their children, several women of Aradhaknagar told me that because there is no school close to their neighborhood, the children have to walk far and cross dangerous train tracks to get to the nearest government school. "They go far to study…Seemapuri, Dilshad Garden…they go far. We are in fear. You go to drop them, then you stick them to your chest and get them back," Krishna-ji told me while clasping her hands together and pulling them against her heart to emphasize her point. Maya, a woman in her forties and another long-time resident of the colony, nods and tells me, "So many cases have happened, when children go to school…there was an accident, it's such a dangerous place." After a short pause, she adds, "that girl has been finished," vaguely referencing a young girl killed by a train a while back. For mothers living in Delhi's JJCs, safety concerns extend far beyond the fear of sexual assault while traversing the city which dominates popular discourses.

Similarly, while discussing basic services available to the colony including sanitation with Padma, a grandmother in her sixties, a resident of Kalandar Colony and a domestic worker, she told me that when they manage to come, municipal sanitation workers simply remove the garbage blocking the gutters and place it on the street, apparently to dry before they can return and collect it. She points out how dangerous this is, stating:

> We all are people who work in households, someone washes utensils, someone cooks, and someone washes clothes in households, secondly there are some who work in factories…now we will go in the morning come back in the evening, so our children have become insects of that gutter. Have they not become? Because we who can take care of them, we are not at home. And if there is garbage lying around children will pick it up, look at it, play with it and if they eat it then again it is trouble.

When I ask if there is a hospital nearby in case the children accidently ingest the trash, she responds, "Yes there is a hospital. We run *there* only. *There* also there is no concern, they say 'go away, you are insects from the gutter and you will always remain there.'" For her and other mothers in the colony, lack of adequate sanitation services also means an ongoing threat to the health of their children which is compounded by their lack of access to dependable medical care. However, while dominant notions of proper Indian womanhood center on motherhood and domesticity, such concerns about threats to children's health due to inadequate infrastructure are seldom characterized as women's issues.

Likewise, the majority of women living in JJCs, who do not have access to an in-home toilet must coordinate group outings to relieve themselves either in community toilets or in nearby fields. Following a community meeting organized by the NGO CURE to discuss cleaning up a park located within the colony which was currently being used as a trash dump and for open defecation, I spoke to several women residents of Geeta Colony about their frustrations with the existing community toilets and why some chose to use the gutters in front of their homes during

the night as a safety measure. Beyond its limited hours of operation, which usually runs from 5am to 10pm depending on the non-resident caretaker's arrival and departure, Urvashi, a woman in her mid-thirties, points out the inadequacies of the colony's community toilet stating, "sisters can't sit inside because there is no bolt inside, there is no door. Our daughters-in-law, daughters, elder mothers can't go because there is no safety. This is something to understand and see." Agreeing with Urvashi, another woman also in her thirties named Kanta adds,

> There is no sewer[54] so we have to use the [community] toilets. Near the toilets four-four boys are standing, our sisters and daughters face a big problem in going, so we go together…She cannot go alone, because there is a men's toilet also. There are good people and bad people. *That* is why you have to go with them. Now if gutters are made deeper and cleaning is being done every day, if we make toilets below that, girls will be safe in their houses.

The risk that one or more of the boys standing outside the community toilet could be "bad people" makes the routine act of relieving oneself a dangerous task for JJ resident women who don't have the luxury of an in-home toilet. Indeed, the persistent threat of sexual assault in the city—which dominated middle-class discourses at the time—was almost exclusively discussed in terms of being able to safely relieve oneself/access toilets by my JJ resident interlocutors (particularly after dark).

Yet, while there are indeed disproportionately fewer public toilets in Delhi for women than there are for men;[55] the access that middle and upper-class women have to toilets in exclusive or semi-public spaces such as shopping malls and restaurants while travelling throughout the city as well as their access to in-home toilets makes the issue of safely accessing toilets one that

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[54] Kanta is referring to the fact that the JJC is not connected to the city's sewer system so even if the residents build their own in-home toilets they wouldn't be able to safely remove the sewage. The community toilet in the colony is not connected to the sewer system either, but instead simply pumps the sewage into a massive tank which is periodically emptied by the MCD.

[55] According to a study conducted on behalf of the Delhi High Court in 2007, out of 3,192 public toilets in Delhi, only 132 were for women. Moreover, six out of Delhi's twelve MCD zones had *zero* public toilets for women. (Sheik 2008: 23).

overwhelmingly impacts the city's poor women. Thus, even within the context of the overlapping threat of sexual assault in public spaces faced by both poor and middle-class women, the issue of safely accessing adequate toilet facilities remains largely ignored within dominant discourses of women's safety.

Even more so, the constant possibility that their home or entire colony may be demolished by the DDA remains an ever-present fear for JJ resident women contradicting the dominant narrative that constructs women's homes as "their spaces" and ones that guarantee them security. As Krishna-ji told me, "Day and night we worry about it, oh where will they send us? Our children will be destroyed…everyone's biggest problem is this. Every day we are in fear, which government will come? Which government will go? How will which government behave with us? What will be their behavior?" Her fear, which was echoed by all the JJ resident women I met, illustrated that while the narrative which equates the domestic sphere with women's safety is generally problematic in its refusal to acknowledge the very real dangers of domestic abuse, dowry violence, or sexual assault within the home; it is particularly false for JJ resident women whose overall insecurity is rooted in the precariousness of their homes. Moreover, as the following conversational exchange between Krishna-ji, and fellow Aradhaknagar resident Seema indicates, the intersecting struggles of JJ resident women at times requires them to subordinate one need in pursuit of another:

> **Krishnaji** – The main thing is, we should get a sewer put in our colony...
>
> **Seema** – When the roof is not 'pukka' will we get into [live in] the sewer?
>
> **Krishnaji** – Once the sewer is put the roof will be 'pukka'...
>
> **Seema** – Sewer will not be put for you, it will be put for the *haveli* [mansion] that will come after we are gone…The big sewer will be put for the big houses and the big parking.

Unlike Seema and Krishna-ji, the women living in the imagined *havelis* of the future which Seema fears may replace the Aradhaknagar JJC, or those currently living in Delhi's middle-class residences, won't/don't have to negotiate between housing security and safely accessing toilets. Consequently, both of these issues remain largely ignored within dominant discourses and state policies on safety and women's rights within the city.

'We are all Women': Womanhood as Shared Experiences

Despite the heterogeneity of Delhi's women inhabitants discussed above, the notion that they nevertheless constitute a cohesive and identifiable group with shared interests persists within popular discourse and among all of my female research participants themselves. Indeed, it is the persistence of this notion of a shared identity that allows for the erasure of the experiences of poor women and the generalization of that of middle-class women. It is thus useful to examine what it is that conceptually constitutes this shared identity. During all of my initial interviews with JJ resident women in the city, when I asked them to tell me the specifics of their daily activities, the women inevitably responded by glossing over their domestic chores and adding some variation of the statement "you know, you're a woman." There was a consistent expectation that regardless of how foreign or economically privileged I might otherwise be, as an adult woman I necessarily understood and performed basic domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, procuring groceries, and anything else dubbed "women's work." This was particularly interesting considering the fact that the middle and upper class women for whom many of the JJ resident women work generally don't engage in said activities. Indeed, their employment as domestic workers is largely predicated on middle and upper class women *not* having to engage in domestic work. Yet, the notion that the domestic sphere is a *feminine* one and that consequently all domestic concerns and responsibilities are necessarily that of women persisted.

Illustratively, Dr. Martha Farrell,[56] co-director of the NGO PRIA, shared her observations of this notion in practice both within her own organization and while conducting trainings for an initiative[57] attempting to increase women's political participation in panchayats[58] in neighboring villages. Within the context of her NGO, Martha pointed out that while she and others had worked very hard to establish organizational policy that took into account the safety of women staff in the field, as well as family friendly policies such as flexible working hours, maternity and paternity leave, and childcare; certain gendered expectations of domesticity persisted among the staff. For instance, while the organization employs support staff to handle its cooking and cleaning needs, and despite her prominent position as co-director, as a woman she is still the only one in upper management who oversees these activities. Similarly, she pointed out that during her time training women to work in panchayats, the expectation of domesticity and deference to men persisted regardless of the women's position within the panchayat:

> And within the system of panchayats and municipalities there was…not allowing the women to speak, even though they belonged to the panchayat or the municipality. If there were chairs, the men were sitting on the chairs; the women sitting on the floor. Women being asked to make tea for meetings, including the Sarpanch[59]—she's making tea for the rest of the goons because she's a woman, not that because she's the Sarpanch she should be sitting there.

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[56] A year after I interviewed her, Dr. Martha Farrell was tragically killed along with 13 other people in a terrorist attack in a guesthouse in Kabul, Afghanistan on May 13, 2015. She was in Kabul leading a gender training workshop on behalf of the Aga Khan Foundation. Her death remains a shock to me and all those who knew her.

[57] The passage of the 73rd & 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution in 1992 formally incorporated panchayats within the framework of municipalities as the form of local self-governance in small towns, rural areas, and semi-urban areas. The 74th amendment also required the reservation of no less than 1/3 of the seats in said municipalities for women, including those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes.

[58] Panchayats [literally "assembly of five" in Hindi] were traditionally governing councils made up of community elders and existed throughout South Asia. In contemporary India, panchayats are formally recognized local government bodies with elected members that operate mainly in small towns and villages (also see footnote 12 above).

[59] A Sarpanch is the elected leader of a panchayat.

Additionally, Martha pointed to a general expectation that regardless of a woman's participation in politics or work outside the home, her domestic duties were expected to remain her paramount obligation:

> What we found were issues of family and having young children were a major deterrent for women joining politics…unless you had a very supportive household. Typically what happens is that in – if you are an unmarried woman, it's fine, because your mother, your sister-in-law, and other women will take on your role. But the minute you're married and you have this husband to look after and your in-laws to look after, the expectation is you will do it all. And then you can do whatever job you want outside. But you can't work outside and not do this.

Often, the result of this expectation was the withdrawal of many women from active participation in the panchayats, either through their own decision or because of family pressure to do so.

However, perhaps the most salient feature of what constitutes womanhood that consistently emerged both within ethnographic encounters with women participants and more broadly within Delhi's public discourse was the shared experience of gendered suffering and oppression. A November 1, 2013 headline of the *TOI*'s Delhi Times section declares, "Each Delhi girl can narrate incidents of being molested." Echoing this sentiment, Martha shared with me that one of her co-workers, a twenty-five year old woman whom she described as "impressive," "forthright," and generally unafraid to speak her mind, had been struggling with how to handle a man on her morning commute who had begun using the cover of the crowded bus to rub his body against hers. The man's behavior, which is unfortunately too common in Delhi, had sparked a discussion among Martha and her colleagues wherein some had suggested the woman change her commute route, while others had insisted the man should be confronted because his behavior shouldn't dictate the woman's movements. Ultimately, Martha points out:

> But for us as women, it is easier…what should I say? It's just easier to move around the issue than to confront it because you don't get support. So if a young women were to come in and say "I'm having this problem. Every day, there's a boy at the bus stop." First question, 'why are you going at that same time every day? What

clothes were you wearing? How do you know he's looking at you? Okay, if all of this is not your fault, then you should not go from [starting] tomorrow.' So women turn a blind eye to things, and women do not want to confront, because who is going to support you? Who is going to support you? So a lot of women take that way out.

Like Martha and her coworker, most of the women I spoke with were neither surprised by the harassment of women by men, nor did they expect to be supported or believed if they report such matters to authorities or their families. Rather, they expected other women to understand, commiserate, and when possible, help each other in finding ways to negotiate and minimize their shared suffering.

For instance, while there seems to be a resignation that most politicians and officials are corrupt and ineffective among most of my research participants, the women of Aradhaknagar and Kalandar Colony seemed to be particularly resentful of Sheila Dixit's record as Delhi's Chief Minister for the preceding fifteen years. At the core of their critique was the belief that, *as a woman*, she should understand the difficulties of running a household and that the policies during her tenure should have reflected this understanding and ameliorated their struggles. Instead, many felt that things had gotten harder for them during her incumbency. As Raj, a woman in her forties who has lived in Kalandar colony for over twenty years told me once, while sitting and drying her hair on the rooftop terrace of her jhuggi:

> Whatever has happened, it is during Sheila Dixit's time. The food prices also…electricity also. Sheila Dixit should not come back under any circumstances. *She is also a lady but she never thought about women.* When Sheila's government came, flour was 4rs/kg today it is 22rs/kg. Oil was 20rs, it is 100rs now, onions were 10rs/kg now it is 100rs/kg, garlic 100rs/kg, and green chilies 100rs/kg…nothing is below 100rs/kg today. [*Emphasis added*]

Interestingly, a significant part of Dixit's and more broadly the Congress Party's platform is rooted in claims of being "pro-poor" and having policies that help JJ residents and the city's poor residents overall. Yet the disappointment the women of Aradhaknagar and Kalandar Colony expressed to

me was not in Dixit's failure to live-up to her party's claims of "pro-poor" policies, which one could also argue based on the rising cost of living described by Raj above, but rather in her failure *as a woman* to mitigate the struggles of other women.

During one of my initial visits to Aradhaknagar, I sat chatting with a small group of women in a shaded area in front of a small community park which was crowded by makeshift homes constructed out of tarp and plastic sheets by families whose jhuggis had been demolished a few years prior in order to build a flyover. As a rather lively group discussion ensued and more women began to join the group, a woman named Seema who was in her late forties began to vocalize her frustrations with what she deemed the lack of unity among Aradhaknagar's resident women. She lamented that a woman's identity as part of her family often superseded any desire she might have as an individual 'woman' to advocate for her rights by working with other women:

> There is no unity among us! At night we say something, but in the morning the man says something—'I will get you gold'—and then we melt. We forget...the fire burning within goes out at that time. Because in a woman motherhood and love for her children arises... and then the 'woman' part dies.

Here, Seema points to an understanding of womanhood wherein women's affection for their children is taken to be inherent and paramount, but that they also have a separate "woman" self/identity with its own needs and desires. While other residents did not explicitly refer to such competing dual identities, their dissatisfaction with the unwillingness or inability of their fellow women to form some kind of united resistance against their shared oppression was a common refrain among the colony's women in their more private conversations with me.

However, perhaps because Seema was so outspoken and seemed to have no qualms about openly criticizing anyone; or perhaps because unlike some of the women who had lived in the colony most of their lives, she had only moved to the colony as an adult after marrying a resident; many of the other women seemed resistant to her claims during our group discussion. After

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Krishna-ji, who was older and more well-liked by the women, interrupted her by saying she was just airing her personal grievances; the following exchange occurred between Seema, her daughter Kamla who was in her late-teens and had joined the group late upon her return from school, Krishna-ji, and Shiva, another longtime resident of the colony in her late forties:

> **Seema** – This is not my personal matter, you keep quiet a bit [to Krishna-ji]. We should speak, the outsider should get to know what is happening in this country…how much *power* a woman has, how much she is losing!
>
> **Shiva** – Is a woman only not sitting in front of you? What proof does she need? Is she not a woman?
>
> **Seema** – The power that she has, *that* power is yet to come in us. She came alone here from America. You can't even send your daughter from here to there alone! She is also someone's daughter, someone's sister...maybe she is a wife also!
>
> **Kamla** – You go with your daughter if you send her till that border there!
>
> **Seema** – There is so much injustice in our country!

As the above excerpt illustrates, for some of the JJ resident women that I came to know, my presence signified both a shared womanhood as well as a divergent one. It is apparent from this exchange and others discussed in this section wherein I was expected to know what a woman's domestic routine entails, that to a certain extent the women of Aradhaknagar agreed upon my sharing their conceptualization of womanhood and thus our collective suffering. Yet, the fact that I had travelled alone from a foreign country, that I had been able to make that decision and execute it without hindrance despite being "someone's daughter" etcetera also signified that my experience of womanhood and what that entails was also divergent. Furthermore, Seema's final statement above implies that my freedom to do those things, or rather their inability to allow their daughters to travel alone is illustrative of the shared suffering of *Indian womanhood* in particular.

Interestingly, there was no suggestion by Seema or any of the other JJ resident women I spoke with that *Indian* women in higher socio-economic classes had a divergent experience then

their own in terms of suffering and 'empowerment' similar to that which they attributed to me. However, later in the conversation while discussing popular claims about women's growing 'empowerment' in Delhi, Seema shared her belief that while it was yet to happen, the continued suffering of women like her at the hands of men would eventually push them to transgress the norms of 'proper' behavior to confront the men and demand their rights. She insisted:

> Power comes to a woman when her courage increases due to over-harassment... when harassment gets too much. When she thinks that the lemon has been squeezed too much and has become sour, then she learns to speak! The men only teach her... a man makes a woman step forward! A woman does not have so much power to leave everything and move ahead…this only a man teaches her. And then he stands up and says, 'the woman is bad!' But who is at fault? The man is at fault! All, he is showing the way…gives strength.

For Seema, while a shared suffering was characteristic of being a contemporary Indian woman, it was not immutable. Similar to the wave of resistance and critique that emerged against sexual violence towards (primarily middle-class) women in public spaces after years of apparent apathy, catalyzed by the Nirbhaya Attack in 2012; a broader resistance to *all* forms of suffering routinely experienced by women inside and outside the home seemed inevitable to her.

Gender, Violence, & the Postcolonial Indian State

While the ongoing issue of sexual assault against women in Delhi has increasingly come into the spotlight in recent years, a historic view of both acute and structural violence illustrates the ways in which they have and continue to shape the postcolonial Indian state's relationship with its women citizens. For instance, Das (1999 & 2007) illustrates the intersection of the social contract and a sexual contract in what she calls the "originary" violence of Partition and how this intersection helped to construct a particular national gender dynamic that continues to intertwine patriarchal kinship structures with national and sectarian identity. She argues that women became marked as victims of sexual assault, as objects of trade between men and nations, and as symbols

of national honor and purity during the violence of Partition and the ensuing political negotiations (1995: 6-8; 56-60). Additionally, by illustrating how the "reclamation" of Indian and Pakistani women from their abductors blatantly disregarded the desires of those women who wanted to remain with their new families and instead separated children of "incorrect" parental pairs all the while perpetuating the rhetoric of restoring women to their families as a matter of national honor, Das (2007) shows how such state policies are consistent with the conceptualization of women as icons or embodiments of each nation over which men (as heads of households and by extension as heads of the nation) had dominion and obligation to protect (18-30).

Indeed, it was this same conceptualization that prompted particular expressions of violence against women during Partition such as the rape, sexual humiliation, and the mutilation of private parts. That is to say, the types of violence inflicted were distinctly sexual and formulated as attacks on the honor of the women's husbands or fathers articulating the failure of these men to live up to their obligation to protect "their" women (Khan (2007); Das (2007)). The physical violation of the women was framed primarily as a violation of their male kin, and by extension as a violation of their (religious) community and nation. What's critical here is that while the explicit violence is condemned, this underlying social framework of gender remains. As a result, the everyday violence perpetuated against women within the patriarchal family and state system goes unrecognized and continues to make such violence as that committed against women during Partition conceivable and thus committable. What's more, while the states' "reclamation" of abducted women was framed as a partial corrective for the explicit violence experienced by them during Partition; the project's active separation of families and disregard of some women's desire to remain where they were was itself illustrative of gendered structures of violence emanating from the state.

Additionally, while the protection of "their" women is integral to the social construction of the patriarchal family and the state (discursively constituted as masculine); I would argue that the failure of these social/state institutions to effectively protect all women is not perceived as a failure to fulfill their obligation within the implied 'sexual contract.' This is because not *all* women's bodies are (equally) inscribed with national 'honor' and 'purity' and thus their experiences of violence do not 'warrant' widespread outrage or state intervention/ protection. Unlike the context of Partition which temporarily allowed for a broader distinction between the "external" and "internal" based primarily on religious identities and their correlative national identities through the newly drawn lines of demarcation; in the context of violence *within* the nation, the various intersecting identities of the victim—including class, caste, religion, ethnicity—and their relation to that of the perpetrator determine how the violence is popularly characterized[60] and whether it warrants the protection/intervention of the state.[61] For instance, the physical or sexual assault of poor or Dalit women by wealthy or upper-caste men, while not uncommon, rarely garners the amount of public outrage or triggers legislative and policy changes like those discussed below following the Nirbhaya attack.[62]

Poor JJ resident women, along with others who don't fit within the frame of the idealized "proper Indian woman" and thus are not (to the same extent) inscribed with the nations 'purity'

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[60] Or if it is characterized as "violence" at all.

[61] Whether in terms of more stringent policy/legislation, or through punitive adjudication.

[62] As an example, I point to the March 2014 abduction, rendering unconscious, and rape of four poor Dalit girls ranging in age from 13 to 18 in the neighboring state of Haryana. Their attackers were five middle-class Jat [upper-caste] boys who abducted the girls as they walked together away from their homes one evening to pee. The boys later used their car to transport and leave the unconscious girls on a train platform miles away from their village. The girls' attempts to have their assailants tried and punished was marked by caste-bias, negligence, and general mishandling on the part of the Haryana police and judicial system; ultimately prompting the families to camp out at Delhi's Jantar Mantar for months demanding justice. For further details of the case see Dubey (2015).

and 'honor,' become '*unrecognizable*' (Butler 2009) as women/lives who must be protected by the state. Various norms of *proper* behavior and ways of being which are both deeply classed and gendered—correlating to what Das (2008) describes as the legal system's function of distinguishing between 'good women' and 'bad women'[63] when adjudicating rape cases—combine to render JJ resident women and their daily experiences of constraint and coercion 'ungreivable.' Specifically, JJ resident women remain *inconceivable* as 'lives' within dominant epistemological frames (Butler 2009). Thus, neither their experiences of acute sexual violence nor their routine experiences of structural violence—such as safely accessing adequate toilet facilities—are recognizable. Similarly, Akhil Gupta (2012) argues that the structural violence of poverty emanating from the Indian state—including endemic hunger and malnutrition, and the lack of access to basic necessities such as shelter, clothing, clean water, and sanitation—is not generally characterized as 'violence' and has indeed become 'invisible' due to the normalization of high poverty rates as a "statistical fact," as have the corresponding conditions of suffering (3-5 &15).[64] This is perhaps why the violence of inadequate infrastructure such as the daily threat of injury or death associated with traversing train tracks to reach the nearest school; the threat of sexual assault while attempting to use communal toilets after dark; or the ongoing health threat posed by children playing in and ingesting toxic garbage left uncollected by the MCD discussed above remains unrecognized within dominant discourses of 'safety.' In the following section I examine some other ways in which structural violence manifests as constraint and coercion in the

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[63] See discussions of "worthy victims" in the following sections of this chapter.

[64] Gupta further argues that extreme poverty and the 'routine' death of the poor "should be theorized as a direct and culpable form of killing made possible by state policies and practices," or in other words, a form of *thanatopolitics* similar to that theorized by Agamben and Foucault which emerges at the intersection of 'biopower' and 'sovereign power (2012:5-6).

lives of my JJ resident interlocutors as they attempt to navigate state bureaucracy and have their basic needs met.

'Bechara[65]': Intersections of Gender and Poverty within a Bureaucratic Matrix

As the preceding sections of this chapter demonstrate, while there are many convergences in the ways in which dominant understandings of gender shape the experiences of women in Delhi, there are also significant differences in the ways in which broad notions of Indian womanhood manifest within and impact the lives of particular women according to their various other intersections of identity. For the women residents of Aradhaknagar, Kalandar Colony, and Delhi's many JJCs, their lived experiences are distinctly formed at the intersection of their gendered identity and their socio-economic status within the context of the city's bureaucratic matrix wherein they must continually negotiate for security of housing and access to basic resources and services. During a small group conversation in Aradhaknagar, I sat with a handful of residents in front of the former community park now occupied by the tents of displaced former residents. Krishna-ji, who had lived in the colony her whole life, in a resigned tone shared some of her daily struggles thusly:

> Because we cook at home, we see the constrains in the family, the men don't see it, they eat and in the morning leave for duty, then they'll come back from duty, get food, where will I get it from, if he gives me 100 rupees? There are 6 children in my house. Madam don't feel bad, we are 'medium' kind of people, we don't have the sense that we can get things done, we are tied since generations by the elders, we are tied by traditions, today's daughters-in-law and daughters are educated, today they are controlling a bit. In our life there was no control.

She illustrates here the intersecting struggles women living in JJCs like hers must constantly negotiate. As a woman, she is expected to run her household. This includes purchasing the groceries she can manage with the little money at her disposal and trying to make it stretch to feed

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[65] 'Bechara' is a Hindi term which interchangeably or simultaneously means "helpless" and "poor." It was often used by both JJ resident women and others to characterize them.

all the people in her household, as well as acquiring clean water with which to cook and clean. While she shares a jhuggi with her husband who brings home an income, ultimately, the home is her domain and making sure that the income is enough to keep the family fed, clothed, and clean is her responsibility and she's expected to make it work. Additionally, even if she manages to stretch the rupees for food etcetera, she is still dependent on a virtually non-existent infrastructure and often corrupt low-level officials to access basic resources such as clean water, sanitation, and ration cards.

Moreover, both practical requirements of daily domestic work and expectations of proper gendered behavior necessitate that negotiations between women like Krishna-ji and governmental institutions be mediated or at least supported by either community pradhans, who themselves expect bribes; or men from within the family, who are often too busy working and perhaps do not prioritize 'domestic issues' such as getting a ration card among the other issues they encounter daily. As the discussion continued, Maya, who is also long-time resident of Aradhaknagar, told me that the local pradhan asks for 2-3 thousand rupees to get ration cards issued, and even if the residents manage to save enough money to pay him his "fee" he's likely to take a very long time to deliver, if he does at all. When I asked her why the mediation of the pradhan was necessary she added:

> Why is a pradhan needed? When there is a pradhan, and no other person is able to do it, then we will go to the pradhan only, right? You want to get work done sitting at home… you don't want to go, the petrol will be burnt... time will get wasted... here no one has time to even die, if we take our work [the Pradhan] will also say, I am also busy... I am also busy... listen to me, forget pradhan our own family men are busy. Tell your husband we have to go there, he will say, I don't have time, pradhan is far away, tell your son we have to go there, he will say I don't have time...our own family members don't have time...We will have to take help of the pradhan for any [bureaucratic] work.

I had a similar conversation about the need for powerful intermediaries to access basic services with Amarvati. Originally form the Azamgarh district of the neighboring state of Uttar Pradesh, she had moved to Kalandar Colony twenty-two years prior and lived in her jhuggi with her husband and five children. Irritated by the constant need for mediation by the Member of Local Assembly (MLA) in order to access government services, she said:

> I heard once in a meeting that MLA has no role to play, but it is there that in all the work MLA will put his seal. In that MLA has no role, everyone can do it on their own. I have seen it in other places…only in Delhi do they ask for MLA's seal, so that MLA…so that people feel that 'our MLA does a lot of work.' But in other places, in this MLA has no role to play. People, on their own identity card…form number 6 comes, they fill it, whatever ID is there after putting it, they fill it and they get it made. But in Delhi, I have heard in meetings that *here* only in most of the work one has to go to MLA. Get MLA's seal. But MLA has no role in it. This is just to show off that 'through me this is done.' He keeps the power with himself that way.

Nevertheless, despite the knowledge that they are being exploited by elected officials and a frustration with the status quo, as poor women their access to formal avenues of resistance are very limited. After reading some articles in the *TOI* about JJ residents running for office in the 2013 Delhi Assembly elections, I once asked some women from Aradhaknagar if any of them had ever considered running for local office. Krishna-ji responded by saying, "If we do this, a bad name will come to us," and suggested instead that if outsider women like myself and my research assistant Kanika started a campaign that was sympathetic to the needs of women like her, it would be easier for them to just vote in support. Pointing to the truth of Krishna-ji's fear, Seema relayed an incident in which she had confronted some people from the electricity company who were overcharging the residents and one of her neighbors had called the police on her. She added, "I spoke up for them and they only called up to get me arrested, what will you say to this?" While the exact circumstances surrounding the incident with the police is unclear, what *is* clear is that the threat of social censure is very real for women who openly defy the expected norms of proper

womanhood. The expectation of adherence to these norms persists within their own communities, even while the *womanhood* of JJ residents remains unrecognized by the state and dominant middle-class discourses. This is consistent with the previous discussions in this chapter which indicate a cross-cutting sense of shared womanhood predicated on shared suffering among my JJ resident interlocutors. Additionally, within the context of colonies like Aradhaknagar and Kalandar colony, challenging the established system of patronage and vote banks between long standing elected officials and JJ residents by running against a corrupt or ineffective official would certainly put a woman at risk of such censure.

In the following section, I shift from this discussion of structural violence towards one of acute violence and the spectacle of rape that dominated middle-class and media discourses of women's rights and empowerment during my time in Delhi. Specifically, I explore the ways in which the widely publicized Nirbhaya attack impacted the city's socio-political landscape and gendered ways of being in Delhi in its aftermath.

The City after Nirbhaya

While Delhi had been widely known as India's 'rape capital' for years, 2013 seemed to mark a palpable shift in the public and political discourse of the city wherein the dark moniker was no longer simply accepted as an inevitability, but rather a rallying cry for change and accountability. The brutal and fatal gang-rape of 23 year old student Jyoti Singh, popularly known as *Nirbhaya*, in December of 2012 triggered a series of political, legal, and socio-cultural responses and brought to the forefront the heretofore largely taken for granted hostility of Delhi towards women. A year later, a December 31, 2013 *Times of India* year-end review article with the headline "Safety Cry after Nirbhaya became 'Freedom' Movement" asserted that "[2013] was the year of women in many ways" (Nandi 2013b). A section of another *TOI* issue titled "Action Replay: 2013"

declared, "Women and their issues took center stage as they attacked 'violators,' however influential, and gave succor and space to the marginalized" (2014). While I would argue that the implied new power-position of women in the city is overstated in these articles, the heightened focus around the safety of women in public spaces certainly allowed for the introduction of broader issues of women's vulnerability within private and work spaces, as well as questions of women's access to full citizenship into the public discourse and onto the political agenda. Indeed by the time I arrived in Delhi in the autumn of 2013, with the local elections on the horizon and the national elections to follow several months later, the treatment and experiences of women—particularly their safety, had become a key political issue incorporated to varying extents into the campaign platforms of major political parties. However, as with dominant discourses of 'the Delhi woman' analyzed above, discussions of women's safety and rights within mainstream media and among political actors largely excluded poor JJ resident women by subsuming them and their needs into a broad category of "women" which was primarily predicated on the experiences and concerns of the middle-class. While illustrating the shared condition of precariousness among all women in Delhi below, I nevertheless point to how JJ resident women remain distinctly 'unrecognizable.' I do so through attempts at locating the impact of broader shifts in gendered government policy and legislation, or lack there-of, on the lives of poor and JJ resident women.

Securing Women

The government response directly following the Nirbhaya attack both in the particular handling of that case and in terms of broader policy change was distinctively prompt and decisive. Although Jyoti Singh ultimately died from her extensive injuries, the government assembled a committee of physicians within days of the attack to ensure she received the best medical care. She was later airlifted to a hospital in Singapore to receive specialized care, where she eventually

died. It is important to note here that there was in fact existing legislation[66] that covers emergency treatment and allows for government subsidized further medical assistance for victims of violent crimes at the discretion of high ranking police officials. However, the involvement of both local and central government leadership in the course of Singh's medical treatment, the formation of a monitoring physicians' committee, and her transfer to an international hospital for treatment were indeed unique due to the high profile nature of the case. Illustrating the disparity between the dispensation of government assistance in the Nirbhaya case and other rape cases in the city, a November 11, 2013 *TOI* article titled "Red tape holds up relief promised to rape survivors" asserts that despite promises by the Delhi government to amend its Victim Compensation Scheme to provide rape survivors 'timely relief' following the Nirbhaya attack, the amendments remained unratified (Chitlangia 2013).[67] As a result, many survivors continued to suffer the financial burden of medical treatments, physical rehabilitation, and lost wages long after their attack. As a case in point, the article points to a 15 year old girl (alias: Rajni) who had been raped by a neighbor the previous year and had yet to receive relief through the existing victims' compensation scheme eight months after applying. She is one of six siblings, and her father who is a day laborer was struggling to pay her medical bills with his already overburdened earnings (Ibid). This points to how structural violence in the form of institutional apathy and bureaucratic lags can compound the

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[66] In February of 2012 (10 months prior to the Nirbhaya attack), the Delhi NCT Government passed the *Delhi Victims Compensation Scheme 2011*, which established a framework whereby victims of violent crimes or their legal dependents could request financial support, depending on the type of crime and the severity of their injuries, to cover costs of medical treatment and rehabilitation, as well as potentially lost wages and other damages. Clause 8 of this legislation also allows police station-chiefs and Magistrates to order emergency medical aid to victims.

[67] In 2015, the legislation was finally amended to expand the factors to be considered for awarding compensation, to revise the quantum of compensation, to include both mental and physical harm, and to expand the list of sexual violence included in the crimes covered under the scheme's purview. It was also reframed to allow for immediate/interim financial assistance to victims following ongoing reports of delays and bureaucratic roadblocks in dispensation of funds.

suffering of poor victims of sexual assault, even when policies meant to ameliorate their financial burdens exist on paper.

Similarly, the arrest and prosecution of the *Nirbhaya* attackers was notably swift. Her assailants were captured within days of the attack, and through a special fast-track court, the five adult attackers as well as the juvenile[68] attacker were tried and convicted in less than a year.[69] Nationally, 164 new 'fast-track courts' (FTCs) for cases of rape and sexual assault were established in 2013, including 6 courts to serve Delhi (Thakur 2013). Unfortunately, while the establishment of these courts was meant to give precedent to and accelerate the processing of sexual offense cases, the exclusive relegation of such cases in Delhi to only six district courts had the opposite effect of decreasing the number of such cases processed even while reports of criminal sexual offences steadily increased. While statistics showed a five-fold increase in reported crimes against women—including rape, molestation, kidnapping, and 'eve teasing[70]' (Mahapatra 2013)—a December 16, 2013 *TOI* article points out that Delhi's 6 sexual offense FTCs were only able to process 415 cases in 2013 with over a thousand cases still pending (Shakil 2013). In contrast, from 2010 to 2012, the city's 70 regular courts had processed between 500-700 sexual offense cases annually (Ibid).

Nevertheless, the creation of these courts, along with the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (2013), and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention,

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[68] One of the attackers was 17 years old at the time of the attack, as a result, he was tried separately and convicted under the Juvenile Justice Act and on August 31, 2013 he was sentenced to three years in a reform facility (which is the maximum sentence for a minor) including time already served (Nigam 2014:209).

[69] 9 months after the attack, 4 out of the 5 adult attackers were found guilty and sentenced to the death penalty. The fifth adult attacker was found hanging in his cell before the completion of the trial and was deemed to be a suicide by the police. (Nigam 2014:209).

[70] 'Eve teasing' is the common Indian term for what is referred to in America as 'cat-calling' or street harassment.

Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013, have opened a space which allowed for a narrative shift towards legitimizing women's claims on their own bodies, occupying space, and full citizenship by acknowledging and criminalizing various ways in which certain spaces and contexts are made hostile to them. Unfortunately, either during implementation or through their limited scope,[71] these potentially inclusive policies ultimately offered little substantive change in the lives of women who did not already fit into the proper middle-class ideal.

The expansion of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) to include acid attacks, often associated with dowry conflicts or some men's response to rejection, as well as voyeurism and stalking implicitly recognizes the potential hostility of private and domestic spaces, as does the sexual harassment act for the workplace. Moreover, a closer examination of the language and wording of these legislative documents reveals an underlying premise that women have a right over their bodies and sexuality[72] as well as a right to safely occupy (certain semi-public) spaces. Clause 3.1 of the *Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace* act proclaims, "*No* woman shall be subjected to sexual harassment at *any* workplace" [emphasis added]. The potential power of this decree lays primarily in its broad scope of inclusion[73] which attempts to countermand the constructions of respectability and proper womanhood often used to render certain women outside the scope of legitimate

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[71] See the discussion of the 2013 Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act in relation to its impact on domestic workers and how it compares to another proposed legislation in the "Who is the Delhi Woman" section above.

[72] The major exception here is that, like the previous laws, the new legislation does not recognize rape within the context of marriage unless the couple is separated and living apart. Essentially, marriage legally endows the husband with a blanket consent.

[73] It is notable that, as indicated in the title of the legislation, sexual harassment is exclusively imagined to be a crime against women. There is no recognition that men or people of other genders (Trans, gender non-conforming etc.) may also experience sexual harassment. Similarly, while the Criminal Law Amendment Act various types and contexts of rape, it is nonetheless defined as an act by men against women.

victimization due to their social/sexual history, their socio-economic class or caste, or the nature of their employment.

Similarly, the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* amends section 53A of the Indian Evidence Act (1872) to state that in cases of sexual harassment, voyeurism, stalking, or rape, "where the question of consent is an issue, evidence of the character of the victim or of such person's previous sexual experience with any person shall not be relevant on the issue of such consent or the quality of consent" (2013:15). It further amends section 146 of the same Evidence Act to add that in such cases "it shall not be permissible to adduce evidence or put questions in the cross-examination of the victim as to the general immoral character, or previous sexual experience, of such victim with any person for proving such consent or the quality of consent" (Ibid). These clauses serve two important narrative—and thus sociopolitical—functions. First, they affirm a woman's right to decide what happens to her and her body by placing her consent as the paramount determinant of said crime and rendering irrelevant questions of her "morality" and sexual choices outside the context of the alleged crime. Secondly, by assuming an inherent and exclusive right of *all* women to consent[74] with regards to their bodies, it removes the expectation that women have to prove their adequate *respectability* and *purity* to be considered "worthy" victims, and instead places the onus of the crime onto alleged assailants. Such legislation attempts to narrow the gap between these emerging narratives that reify women's claims over their own bodies and demands for full citizenship rights and the lived experiences of women in India by codifying certain aspects of those claims and offering potential avenues of legal recourse for their violation.

However, these laws and policies are not interpreted and implemented in a socio-political bubble but rather through existing dominant epistemological frames discussed above which work

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[74] See footnote '72' above.

to determine not only who counts as 'respectable' but also who is recognized as 'woman.' As a result, a gap between the codified laws and their implementation, a blind-spot in the coverage of said laws over certain populations of women, as well as the persistence of narratives of respectability and worthy victimhood, is evident even within the confines of the special "fast-track courts" (FTCs) created specifically for the prosecution of sexual offenses. Additional Session Judge (ASJ) Virender Bhat, who presides over the Dwarka special FTC (one of Delhi's six "sexual offence" courts), made headlines in 2013 for making several pointed remarks against women plaintiffs' morality and sexuality as well as that of women in general, while meting out judgments of acquittal in several cases ranging from kidnapping and rape to intercourse by "falsely obtained consent." His comments, published in a January 7, 2014 *TOI* article titled "Judge's Rape Remark Insensitive: HC," included the following:

> They [young women] voluntarily elope with their lovers to voluntarily explore the greener pastures of bodily pleasure, and on return to their homes, they conveniently fabricate the story of kidnapping and rape in order to escape scolds and harsh treatments from parents.
>
> The girls are morally and socially bound not to indulge in sexual intercourse before a proper marriage, and if they do so, it will be to their peril and they cannot be heard to cry later that it was rape.
>
> She [a woman who has pre-marital sex] must understand that she is engaging in an act which not only is immoral but also against the tenets of every religion. No religion in the world allows pre-marital sex.
>
> It is becoming a very difficult job, nowadays, for the courts to differentiate the genuine rape cases from the false ones. The cases like the present one create a well-founded belief among the public as well as the judiciary that the rape-related laws are used with impunity. (Singh 2014)

It is important to note that a Delhi High Court review of two of ASJ Bhat's comments above found that they were not "based on the evidence on record"[75] but were rather apparently based on the

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[75] Moreover, section 53A of the Indian Evidence Act (1872) amended by the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* discussed earlier in this chapter clearly prohibits the use of the accusers sexual history and questions of her "morality" in the adjudication of such a case.

judge's "personal knowledge pertaining to females" (Singh 2014). In response, a division bench of justices on the Delhi High Court found that ASJ Bhat's comments were "prima facie insensitive" and had the potential to influence a lighter treatment of sexual harassment and sexual assault cases by police. However, the only "punitive" action taken against judge Bhat was a recommendation that he attend "gender sensitivity talks" and the expungement of two of his comments from the record (Ibid). Moreover, the verdicts of such cases over which he presided have not been reviewed, and he continues to preside over the Dwarka special FTC in Delhi. Indeed, he made the final two comments included above the day *after* the High Court issued him a reprimand for his "gender biased" and "insensitive" remarks.

Similarly, despite TOI's declarations of "the year of women," a growing narrative of rampant false accusations of sexual assault and harassment as a means of enacting revenge or as a tool of blackmail have emerged, particularly among men in positions of power, counteracting women's moderate legislative gains discussed above. In December 2013, following sexual harassment allegations against a former Supreme Court judge, union minister Farooq Abdullah publically proclaimed that he was hesitant to employ a female secretary or even talk to women for fear of being accused of impropriety, further stating, "Who knows? I might end up in jail because of a complaint" (Chakrabarty 2013). Along similar lines, in November of the same year Samajwadi Party leader Naresh Aggarwal asserted that the new "anti-sexual harassment in the workplace" law was proving "counter-productive" for women because men would now choose not to hire women for fear of "trumped-up charges." He went on to tell reporters that according to a senior law officer he knew, judges had "urged their chief justices to stop appointment of girls as legal interns" ("SP neta: Men now fear" 2013)

Considering the public and familial backlash faced by women who are known to have been sexually assaulted—evidenced by recurring cases of "honor killings," re-victimization and assault by police officers, and public speculation and shaming of their moral character and sexual history within the media—the notion that there are women casually lining up to falsely accuse men of such acts is at best a gross exaggeration. Yet, this emerging narrative attempts to reformulate public discourse about sexual assault and harassment by repositioning accused rapists as victims forever marked and socially ostracized due to false accusations despite the simultaneously recurring refrains of "boys will be boys" and "she was asking for it" that persist in popular discourse and media. As many others had commented before her, on January 29th, 2014, Dr. Asha Mirge, a member of the Maharashtra Women's Commission stated during a public political event that "Girls' body language should not be such that it invites attention of a potential rapist lurking around," and went on to ask "why did Nirbhaya go for a late night show with her boyfriend? She could have gone for a matinee or an early evening show" ("Why did Nirbhaya go" 2014). And while Nirbhaya was still being posthumously implicated in her own attack a year after her death, on April 11, 2014, Samajwadi Party Chief Mulayam Singh Yadav declared during an election rally in the neighboring state of UP that the new legislation assigning the death penalty to repeat rapists was too harsh since it's not uncommon for "boys to make mistakes." Echoing the words of ASJ Bhat, he added, "*ladke ladke hain. Kai baar, jab ladke-ladki mein matbhed ho gaya to ladki jaake bayaan deti hai ki rape ho gaya* [boys will be boys. Following a boy-girl quarrel, the girl complains she was raped]" ("Boys make mistakes" 2014).

The above comments, which are all too common, illustrate that while women who have survived sexual assault continue to be questioned and blamed for their attack, even repeat rapists manage to garner open sympathy and the benefit of the doubt. During a November 11, 2014

acquittal judgment of two men (apparently falsely) accused of drugging and raping a woman, ASJ

Bhat gave the following impassioned statement[76]:

> It can't be lost sight of that the false accusation of rape causes intense miseries and humiliation to the accused. The rape accused are looked down upon in the society. Rape being the most hated crime in society, men accused of this heinous offence are ostracized from the society. Their plight continues even after their acquittal from the court as nobody takes note of the acquittal. They are treated as rape convicts even during the trial of the case. It is very difficult, nay impossible, to restore the lost honor and dignity of a rape accused after his acquittal from the court. They are never compensated for the emotional distress, humiliation and pecuniary damage suffered by them. (*State vs. Vikash Tyagi & Manish Yadav*, p.15 (2014))

While the emotional and psychological trauma of enduring a false accusation for a violent crime

should not be minimized, it is important to note the lack of at least a comparable level of

compassion and outrage for the *victims* of such violent crimes. In fact, as the remarks by various

officials discussed above illustrates, the level of social humiliation and ostracization described

by ASJ Bhat during his adjudication seems more consistent with the experiences of rape victims

than those accused of the crime, particularly those acquitted of such acts due to false accusations.

Thus, it seems even more likely that women said to have made *false* allegations would endure

even more public backlash and social censure considering the shaming and, at best, insensitive

treatment of *actual* rape victims.

Nevertheless, this narrative of rampant false reporting and men's growing vulnerability

to this threat works in tandem with the narrative of *respectability* and *proper Indian womanhood*

previously discussed to once again remove the onus of sexual assault and harassment away from

men. Moreover, it allows for the further exclusion of women from certain non-domestic spaces,

particularly workplaces historically dominated by men. Even as legislation such as the 2013

Sexual Harassment of Women in the Workplace Act attempts to codify the right of women to

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[76] Full judgement document available online at << https://indiankanoon.org/doc/139080284/>>

fully access a safe ('formal'/corporate) workplace, the imagined "threat" of false accusation that women pose to their male colleagues helps to de-legitimize their right to occupy those spaces. In the context of 'informal' or domestic workplaces in which poor and JJ resident women are employed, these narratives serve to further discourage the women from reporting any incidents of harassment. The existing power dynamics between the women and their employers, as well as the inherent precariousness of their positions make the probability of their successfully addressing an incidence of harassment and keeping their jobs very low.

Surveillance as Security

In addition to reforms in punitive legislation and policy, state actors also took steps towards establishing preventative policies on crimes against women, particularly in terms of women's safety in public spaces. While safety from sexual assault was the explicit aim of most of these proposed policies; it should be noted that none of them included plans to increase the safety of JJCs through the provision of adequate and safely accessible toilet facilities to minimize JJ resident women's risks of sexual assault. Nevertheless, in early 2013, the central government announced the creation of the "Nirbhaya fund" with a budget of one crore (ten million) rupees to be allocated by the Ministry of Finance toward initiatives that 'increase women's safety in cities.' To this end, various state departments and ministries submitted proposals ranging from GPS based monitoring of public transportation and the installation of live camera feeds into buses to offer real-time assistance to identifying and mapping out areas where woman are particularly vulnerable. Yet, by the end of 2013, proposals were still being considered and no allocations had been made (Dhawan 2013). However, the local Delhi government did launch several ventures of its own. The city's Department of Transportation increased regulation of public service vehicles by requiring the installation of GPS trackers, "public service" certifications and badges on charter buses, and

posting guards on its night buses (Banerjee 2013). Notably, many of the proposed interventions were predicated on increased surveillance and policing, and thus are ultimately linked to the circumscription of women's movement within the city.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, women's presence in India's urban spaces remains highly scrutinized necessitating that they signify an 'acceptable' purpose in occupying such spaces as well as embody and perform 'demure' and respectable femininity while consuming and traversing said spaces.[77] Other scholars have also pointed to the utility of surveillance as a means of regulating and disciplining bodies (Foucault 1977) and as a means of creating exclusionary spaces (Crawford (1992); Judd (1995)). Using interviews with women in Finland and Scotland regarding their responses to the use of surveillance cameras in public spaces such as metro stations and shopping malls, Koskela (2002) points out that while women felt safe to a certain extent, they also felt uneasy, embarrassed, guilty without reason, and even fearful (269). The disembodied nature of a CCTV camera along with the uncertainty of who is watching on the other side creates a sense of mistrust. Similarly, I assert that while the use of cameras throughout Delhi's public transportation system and increased police presence may be intended as deterrents for would-be assailants, for women whose visibility is already magnified and scrutinized in public spaces, these measures also add yet another layer of circumscription to their movements. As Koskela (2002) argues, "surveillance can be thought of as the re-embodiment of women, as an extension of the male gaze…arguably, in most cases the practice of surveillance contributes to perpetuating the existing imbalance in gender relations rather than challenging it" (273).

Moreover, for many JJ resident women, whose routine experiences with police officers involve extortion and threats, the increased presence of police officers is unlikely to elicit feelings

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[77] See discussion in chapter 1 on Chakrabarty (1992), Kaviraj (1997), Phadke et al (2011), Hansen (2001), and Lukose (2009).

of security. Indeed, the only reference my JJ resident interlocutors made to police officers was within the context of their ongoing harassment and demands for pay-offs.[78] Therefore, I would argue that a sense of security with police is a privilege of class that assumes the state and its agents act in one's service. It is predicated firstly on the belief that police officers' *raison d'être* is to serve the public good, and secondly on the understanding that one is considered to be part of the "public good." However, as illustrated by the proliferation of "public interest litigations[79]" in Delhi wherein long standing JJCs continue to be razed in response to middle-class complaints of pollution, blight, and criminal threat, JJ resident women do not fit into dominant narratives of the "public" for whose "interest" institutions such as police departments exist. Indeed, the existence of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPc) section 46(4),[80] which prohibits police officers from arresting women and taking them into custody between sunset and sunrise (outside of the most exceptional cases) in an attempt to shield them from sexual misconduct by police officers, does little to inspire a sense of security in police presence among women in general and JJ resident women in particular.

Nevertheless, the Delhi Police Department claims to have made attempts to transform the way it deals with crimes against women. In a December 15, 2013 *TOI* full page commemoration of the anniversary of the Nirbhaya attack titled "A Year after Nirbhaya," one headline reads "Cops more sensitive, responsive" (Chauhan 2013). In this article, special commissioner of police Dharmendra Kumar claims that interactions with "various stakeholders" including NGOs, women's groups, and legal experts directly following the Nirbhaya attack revealed four recurring complaints about police in the context of crimes against women: (1) no one listens to women's

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[78] See chapters 4 & 5 for JJ residents' comments on interactions with police.

[79] See discussion of PILs in the *Rights to the City and Legitimate Belonging* section of chapter 1.

[80] On March 08, 2014, a *TOI* article reported that four Delhi police officers had been found guilty of violating this ordinance after a woman who had been detained overnight accused them of molesting her while she was in custody (Shakil 2013)

complaints; (2) women are discouraged from filing police reports and pursuing cases, and instead are pressured to come to a 'compromise' with their accused attacker; (3) when filed, the offense is reduced to a lesser crime; (4) the victim's identity doesn't remain anonymous as per the IPC. As a corrective for these grievances, Kumar claimed, "We decided to change every aspect of policing for crimes against women. Today, no woman complainant is turned away from a police station. There are 24x7 women's help desks at every police station; a woman's complaint is recorded verbatim in an FIR [first incident report]." Another officer asserted that the police have been directed to "be more sensitive" to women complainants and not make disparaging remarks (Ibid).

It is doubtful however, that this newly acquired sensitivity towards women applies to poor JJ resident women who continue to be routinely harassed by the police, or that the women themselves would indeed go to a police station to report such a crime. Yet, while the scope and sustainability of these changes remains to be seen, they may be a factor in the apparent spike in reports of crimes against women. Nevertheless, the growing narrative of rampant false accusations discussed above brings to mind questions of how difficult the cases will be to prosecute even if they reach the courtroom.

Politicizing Rape and the Will to Empower

While lacking the weight of the official policy changes discussed above, the election season with its accompanying campaign platforms and attempts to woo voters created a dynamic public discourse about sexual violence as well as broader issues of women's rights and their right to occupy the city's spaces. During an interview for a *TOI* article in December 2013, women's right activist Albina Shakeel pointed out, "Gender issues, or women's issues in particular, have never been part of a political movement.[81] But now there is such a level of dissatisfaction that the

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[81] It is important to note that India has a long established feminist/women's rights movement. However, the mainstream public and political salience women's rights garnered following the Nirbhaya attack and corresponding

politicization of gender issues is a positive sign" (Nandi 2013). Metro stations, billboards, walls and sides of buildings throughout Delhi held campaign posters of major parties promising to 'empower' and make women safe in the city, while daily newspapers ran full page ads by both political hopefuls and the sitting government claiming credit for, or an established record of supporting, successful initiatives for women. One ad for the BJP appearing periodically in the *Times of India* during the early months of 2014 proclaimed in bold letters "Let's Empower Women," under which were five brief statements in smaller font:

> Let's make public places safer.
> Let's empower women through education and skill development.
> Let's ensure women have greater participation in decision making.
> Time for Change.
> Time for Modi.

Next to the words was a large photograph of Narendra Modi, who was running for Prime Minister at the time, looking directly into and pointing his index finger at the camera reminiscent of the famous "Uncle Sam Wants You" posters in America.

In another *TOI* ad for the incumbent Congress Party, Minister of Women and Child Development (WCD) Krishna Tirath appears in three photographs. In the first photo she is standing by herself smiling dressed in a red sari and wearing a large bindi on her forehead, in the second photo she is serving food to an unidentified woman at what appears to be a Ministry of WCD event, and in the last photo she appears to be placing a garland around the neck of another unidentified woman. The photos, noticeably lacking any male subjects, seem to be emphasizing that Mrs. Tirath is herself an "empowered" woman as much as they are highlighting the WCD's projects. Indeed, the first photograph, which occupies a third of the Ad space, gives no indicators

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protests was indeed unprecedented. (For brief introductory readings on women's movements in India see Krishnaraj (2012) and Subramaniam (2004))

of the context in which it was taken, and could be that of any smiling sari-clad middle-class woman. Flanked by these pictures is bold text which reads, "Committed to ensuring Growth, Empowerment, Justice and Safety for Girls and Women." Below this is a long list of programs and legislation divided under subheadings as follows: Schemes for Nutrition and Health; Schemes for Empowerment and Training; Schemes for Providing Safe Abode; and Key Legislative Initiatives. This ad was consistent with most of the incumbent Congress Party's campaign propaganda which focused on the party's successes while in office.

In contrast, BJP and AAP campaigns consistently pointed to the ongoing dangers faced by women in the city often referencing the Nirbhaya attack and the increasing reports of rape in the media to delegitimize Congress's claims at "empowering" women while in office, and promising instead platforms of their own to ensure women's safety in the city. During a November 28, 2013 press conference, senior party leader Shushma Swaraj promised that BJP would remove Delhi's stigma as the 'rape capital,' stating that if elected the party would provide "extraordinary security through lighting, CCTV, and around-the-clock patrols" for one thousand "vulnerable" spots around the city and "raise a 25,000-strong Delhi Women's Protection Force that [would] be trained by international experts and equipped by the latest technology" ('BJP Promises' 2013). BJP's election promises also included exclusive public transportation for women, GPS for all public motorized transportation including auto-rickshaws, taxis, and buses, as well as better training for medical staff dealing with rape and sexual assault victims and simplified FIRs for filing rape charges. In an unusual step, the party also planned to instate mandatory self-defense training for all girls in schools (Ibid). They did not, however, offer any corresponding compulsory "training" for boys to prevent them from raping.

Similarly, the newly emerging AAP also promised to establish *Mahila Suraksha Dal* [Women's Security Teams] run by retired military personnel. These MSDs would incorporate men and women representatives from local communities as well as representatives from NGOs with the goal of perceptibly improving "societal mindset towards gender issues," as well as securing physical environments ('Mahila Suraksha Dal' 2014). As an AAP official pointed out, "these women's security teams would not be a parallel police force but more like private security guards who will not only undertake safety audits to identify key security issues pertaining to women in the community but would also mobilize the local police and administrative machinery to take appropriate action" (Ibid).[82]

AAP also promised to install CCTV cameras in every police station to ensure that police officers did not ignore complaints by women, as well as better lighting and unspecified "security provisions" on roads, parks, buses and "all public spaces" (AAP 2013: 2). Like the policies of the incumbent government discussed above, most of the interventions proposed by AAP and BJP to address women's safety in Delhi were predicated on heightened surveillance and policing which conversely made those spaces less desirable for women to occupy. Similarly, none of the major parties proposed ways to make JJCs safer for their women residents. Also problematic was the apparent lack of critical approach behind the proposed initiatives towards the causes of violence experienced by women in the city and how to address them.

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[82] Delhi is not an independent state, but rather a union territory. This means that while it has its own legislative assembly, chief minister, and lieutenant governor, certain aspects of the city's administration fall under the jurisdiction of the central government. Accordingly, the Delhi Police Department falls under the central government's administration, which in turn greatly limits the amount of influence local officials (including those who would be elected into office during the elections being discussed) have on aspects of policing in the city. This was perhaps why both BJP and AAP proposed establishing new women's security/protection forces that would fall under the local government's jurisdiction.

Circumscription and Self-Defense as Empowerment

While "women-only" modes of transportation and legal codes that prohibit police officers from holding female suspects in custody over-night may provide immediate relief from the real threat of men who grope women in crowded trains and police officers who use their position of power to victimize certain civilians, and mandatory self-defense classes for young girls in schools may give them a certain layer of protection while they move through the city; these initiatives also normalize assaultive behaviors of men, concede swathes of public spaces and hours of the day to them, and teach young girls that they must be vigilant and prepare to fight to protect their bodies while never teaching boys that they must not rape or assault. For instance, there were a few times during my stay in Delhi that I had to board a "general public" compartment because the train was about to pull off and I did not have time to run to the opposite end of the platform to the women's compartment. Each of those times, my female friends and I were met with openly hostile looks by the men in those compartments. Some men refused to move aside to make space for us or to let us off at our stops. It was clear that they resented our being in "their" compartment when we had one of our own which they could not enter. By marking off one or two compartments as "women's," the rest of the train had by default become marked as "men's."

Similarly, the code that prevents police officers from detaining women after dark is linked to the expectation that respectable women are not meant to be out after sunset. It is this same notion that allowed people like Dr. Mirge discussed above to confidently ask why Nirbhaya had gone to an evening movie on the night she was attacked. By uncritically accepting men's violent behavior as inevitable, particularly after dark, *proper* and *respectable* women are therefore further limited to only occupying the city's public spaces during the day. Correspondingly, women who are assaulted while traveling in a "general public" train compartment, while out at night, or do not

"defend" themselves by fighting back can in-turn be cast as (at least partially) responsible for their own assault. Therefore, far from "empowering" women, many of the proposed initiatives further scrutinized and circumscribed women's movement under the guise of security.

Interestingly, while the term "empowerment" became ubiquitous in public discourse about women during election season, the meaning of the term seemed ambiguous and broad, often used interchangeably with "safety." Indeed, while "women's empowerment" has emerged as a key focus of international political discourse in recent decades, particularly within the context of socio-economic development, the term *empowerment* remains without a fixed clear meaning. Instead, it is reinvented and deployed in different institutional, spatial, and historical locations by variously positioned social actors. While the term itself arises out of anti-imperialist, radical, and feminist language it has nevertheless been increasingly embraced by governments such as that of India and powerful transnational institutions that have depoliticized the poverty and powerlessness it addresses and instead utilize empowerment as a "pre-packaged development strategy" (Sharma 2008: xx -4).[83]

Similarly, in the context of the 2013-2014 election season in Delhi, the term was often deployed by politicians to signify and address women's ongoing physical insecurity in public spaces while glossing over the structural and socially embedded gender inequalities that maintained the city's public spaces as ones to be exclusively and 'legitimately' occupied by (Hindu middle-class) men. Nevertheless, as many politicians declared their vague intentions of "empowering" women and ensuring their safety they were met with public critique and pushback demanding accountability and clear plans of action. Newspapers such as the *Times of India* frequently published Op-Ed and think pieces analyzing and critiquing political parties' campaign

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[83] [83] See chapter 6 for further discussions of the use of empowerment narratives as a tool of neoliberal governmentality.

platforms and promises particularly in their attempts to gain women's votes. One January 23, 2014 *TOI* think piece titled "What Aam Aurat Needs" declares that "women's safety requires the undoing of patriarchal myths AAP shares with other parties" (Hosseini 2014). Another *TOI* article from April 11, 2014 with the headline "No party has made it safer for women" points out that despite the Congress Party and BJP's claims that they are committed to curbing violence against women, their records show that both parties have been very ineffective at doing so in the past (Varma 2014). Yet, while several of these public critiques were adamant about the need for critical reflection on existing policies and underlying causes for gender based violence and inequality, they also generally lacked a similar critical reflection on the ways in which class impacted these issues.

<u>Towards a More Inclusive and Substantive Discourse on Women's Rights</u>

Many veteran women's rights activists and politically engaged citizens used the opening provided by the emerging politicization and mainstreaming of women's rights and empowerment discourses to push for more substantial legal and social reforms and publically critique the underlying patriarchy upon which many policies were built. Those who for years had been advocating for comprehensive reforms in women's legal rights within the contexts of marriage, sexual harassment in the workplace, quotas for women in parliament and more found renewed public interest and political will in their causes. In fact, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act which came into effect in late 2013 was based on the Vishaka Guidelines, a set of procedural guidelines which were drafted to by the Indian Supreme Court in 1997 for dealing with sexual harassment cases during the judgement of the PIL Vishaka and others vs. State of Rajasthan[84] which established legal president but wasn't officially

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[84] In 1992, Bhanwari Devi, a Dalit social worker in Rajasthan interceded to stop a child-marriage from taking place within a local upper-caste family. As retribution, five men from the family raped her but were acquitted. Outraged

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enacted as legislation until after the Nirbhaya case, having been tabled for over fifteen years. In the weeks leading up to the Delhi Assembly elections taking place on December 4th, 2013, two important documents were released in attempts to go beyond vague demands for women's safety and empowerment and instead innumerate and demand a commitment for specific and more inclusive policy changes within the platforms of all the major political parties.

The first was a "Gender Manifesto" compiled and published jointly on November 28th by Woman Power Connect, a national level advocacy organization established to bridge the gap between grassroots activism and government policy, and the Center for Social Research (CSR) a Delhi based non-profit NGO with a mission to "empower the women and girls of India, guarantee their fundamental rights, and increase understanding of social issues from a gender perspective" (WPC & CSR 2013:1). Aimed both at the upcoming 2013 local assembly elections across the country such as those in Delhi, as well as the general elections in spring 2014, the Gender Manifesto presents a broad and intersectional range of demands that attempts to address issues faced by all Indian women. It demands that political parties take an active role in addressing women's safety, health and nutrition, work opportunities, and education and that they take further steps to ensure women's equal participation in every sphere of society. It further acknowledges the diversity and existing inequality among women and asks that political parties "give special attention to the needs and priorities of marginalized and vulnerable women such as Dalits, Tribals, single women, minorities and other marginalized groups" (Ibid). Accordingly, it goes on to enumerate a long list of policy reforms specified by 'cohort' including policies for girl children,

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by the treatment of Devi by local police and the resulting acquittal, a women's rights organization named Vishaka along with several other women's rights NGOs brought a public interest litigation (PIL) to the Supreme Court arguing that Devi incurred the ire of her rapists while performing her job as social worker and used this as a launching board to establish laws against sexual harassment in the work place. Complete court judgement available online at: << https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1031794/>>

elderly women, and variously marginalized women, as well as by 'sector' including economic empowerment, political empowerment, social infrastructure, education, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, environment, and violence in private and public spaces (Ibid: 2).

The second document, written specifically for the Delhi elections and released on December 1st by the local branch of international social justice and advocacy NGO Avaaz was titled the *Delhi Womanifesto* and included initial signatories ranging from the general secretary of All India Women's Progressive Association (AIPWA) and recipients of Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri[85] awards, to individual scholars, activists, and journalists. Asking all candidates running for Chief Minister (CM) of Delhi to commit to a six point plan for protecting the safety and ensuring equal rights of women and girls in Delhi, the preamble to the "Womanifesto" reads as follows:

> Since Delhi rose up against rape and sexual assault last December, over 1300 rape cases and thousands of molestation cases have been reported. But, despite a round of reforms, lakhs of assaults remain invisible to the police and the judicial eye, and Delhi's women still do not have the freedom that is *every person's birthright*. With this election Delhi's *citizens* are demanding more action to stop these crimes against women. Slogans and limited reform are not enough. [*Emphasis added*]

It goes on to demand government funded comprehensive public education to end the culture of gender based violence with curricula for each level of schooling; detailed plans of action for implementing and enforcing laws against gender based violence; the creation and enforcement a public protocol for police response to crimes against women; the establishment of more FTCs for crimes of violence against women with reforms of court procedures to address victims' needs; the creation of one-stop 24 hour crisis centers in hospitals to provide comprehensive services to women who are victims of violent crimes; and infrastructural changes to ensure that Delhi is a safe

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[85] The Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri are the third and fourth highest civilian awards in India, respectively. The Padma Bhushan is given as recognition of distinguished service to the nation in any field, while the Padma Shri is awarded in recognition of distinguished contribution in the Arts, Education, Industry, Literature, Science, Sports, Medicine, Social Service and Public Affairs. They are awarded publically by the President of India during the annual Republic Day ceremonies in Delhi.

city in which to move around. Yet, while the *Delhi Womanifesto* demanded broader infrastructural changes that could indeed improve the overall safety of JJ resident women; the overwhelming focus of the document remained sexual assault, which had emerged as the overarching 'women's issue' among the middle-class. However, taken together these two documents offered the most critical and comprehensive plan of action both in terms of women's safety and in terms of addressing some of the social and structural causes behind gender based violence and inequality in Delhi and elsewhere. They also provide a broad framework wherein "empowerment" could be imagined beyond safety and financial independence, and Indian women can be understood *not* as a monolith but rather as heterogeneous group with intersectional identities and needs as well as overlapping interests.

Moreover, while the campaign platforms of the various political parties towards curbing violence against women and "women's empowerment" may have been vague or lacking in critical analysis of the deeper issues behind gender based violence and inequality, their willingness to publically support the *Womanifesto* (to varying extents)[86] is indicative of the shift in Delhi's public discourse surrounding (certain) women's right to occupy the city's spaces without the threat of violence. This was further illustrated by the swift public backlash that consistently challenged comments by politicians and government officials blaming sexual assault victims for being out late or dressing "provocatively," or downplaying sexual harassment in the workplace as misunderstood "banter." Indeed, while the continued persistence of such victim-blaming narratives is disheartening, the insistence by civil society groups, journalists, and individuals that officials

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[86] While the incumbent CM Sheila Dixit of the Congress Party publically endorsed the *Womanifesto*, CM candidates Arvind Kejriwal (AAP) and Harsh Vardhan (BJP) expressed general support of the document's aims and policy goals to the press.

making such remarks retract them and make public apologies also suggests that there's a growing intolerance for these sedimented sexist narratives.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the ways in which dominant middle-class discourses on women's safety and broader notions of gender and Indian womanhood bear upon the relationship of the state with its women citizens. I drew on conceptualizations of 'bare life,' 'frames of recognition' and 'grievable life' as a way of understanding the varying treatment and deployment of violence—both acute and structural—against women occupying different social positions in Delhi. I argued that while all women in Delhi (and beyond) share a general condition of precariousness in terms of gender, JJ resident women remain outside dominant epistemological frames of both womanhood and broader urban citizenship (which similarly centers the middle-class). As a result, their ability to successfully make claims on the state's protections are highly limited. I also examined the recent shifts in government policies on "women's safety" and discourses of "empowerment" to illustrate that while there have been some modest legislative gains for upper and middle-class women, these transformations have been largely tangential to the lives of JJ resident women in the city. However, the emergence of women's rights within the city's mainstream social and political discourse has created a potential space for a more inclusive and substantive approach towards addressing women's rights in Delhi, and has allowed advocates to publically challenge certain deep-seated sexist narratives. In the following chapter I extend this exploration of how particular populations become reduced to "bare life" and thus *ungrievable* through a broader analysis of dominant discourses on JJCs and their residents. Particularly, I examine how *legitimate belonging* and *urban citizenship* are asserted and contested through the

deployment of persistent and distinctly classed narratives. I also examine the ways in which JJ

residents contest their marginalization, assert their belonging, and make claims on the state.

Chapter 4: Legitimate Belonging and Rights to the City

In this chapter, I use formulations of *legitimate belonging* and *urban citizenship* introduced in Chapter 1 to map narratives about Delhi's poor residents in popular media, interviews of NGO and government staff, urban planners, and JJ residents themselves, to explore how in-migration, pollution, criminality, moral corruption, economic and social productivity, as well as birthright are all utilized to assert and question their legitimate belonging in the city and thus their right to entitlements and claims on space and resources. Particularly, I examine how individuals in the media as well as research participants occupying different social locations position themselves vis-à-vis the state, the city, and other Delhi residents by accessing particular narratives about themselves and the "other." Finally, I explore the ways in which JJ residents and their allies alternatively utilize appeals to conscience and rights-based approaches to negotiate for secure housing and access to basic resources and services. I conclude by examining the case of Kathputli Colony and the events surrounding the DDA's 2014 attempt to 'rehabilitate' it to analyze residence-based organizing by JJ residents and the language and rhetorical devices they use to frame their claims-making in the context of impending demolitions.

Whose City?

A week following Diwali in November of 2013, a private advertisement consisting entirely of text over a light green background appeared in the City section of the *TOI* introducing a new collective of Delhi residents who called themselves TRUE or Towards Rehabilitation of Urban Environment. The ad, which covered half a page, had the heading "TRUE…are you?" and was penned by the apparent founder of this new collective whose name remained anonymous. The body of the text began thusly, "I am a regular middle class man." The author goes on to describe waking up the morning after Diwali to the city filled with smog resulting from the widespread use

of fireworks during the holiday, and taking the time to reflect on his own behavior and to acknowledge his contribution to the pollution instead of criticizing the government as "most of us patriotic Indians" are wont to do. Rather he points to the positive achievements of the government in recent years, among which he includes flyovers, world class airports, a stable electricity supply and more hospitals and schools. He admits there remains much to be done, including fighting the problem of "polluting cars, traffic jams, *beggars at crossings*, *illegal encroachments*, overflowing and chocked drains, limited [and] undrinkable water, murder, rape, theft, corruption, food laced with chemicals, milk with chalk, fake medicines…" [*Emphasis added].*

He continues by stating that while he obsessively maintains the cleanliness and upkeep of his ancestral house, he has typically been unconcerned with what happens outside of his house gates and chastises himself and others for not shouldering the responsibility of taking care of the city and the nation. After offering a list of suggestions of ways for "us" (read: other middle-class citizens like him) to make a difference, ranging from planting trees and conserving water and energy to "politely reprimanding" fellow Delhiites who break queues instead of "dismissing them as uncouth" and educating a child who cannot afford schooling, he urges fellow Delhiites to join him and his friends in this new collective named TRUE, and declares "collectively we can voice our concerns to the government…and together as an extended arm of the government try and *make our city a model city*!" [*Emphasis added*] This advertisement, while more generous towards the government than what is commonly heard in conversations around the city, is illustrative of the dominant discourse in Delhi wherein claims to the city by middle-class residents (even more so than affluent residents[87]) are taken for granted, and the city's poor residents such as those who beg

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[87] For instance, it is not uncommon to hear criticisms of the rich for being inconsiderate of others by crowding residential streets with their many cars and leaving little room for others, or for living lives of leisure while other Delhiites [read: middle-class] work hard for all they have. It should be noted however, that this criticism is often on

for alms at crossings or "encroach" on public land, are characterized along with corruption, crime, and pollution, as problems be solved. This discourse is predicated on the persistence of certain narratives and entrenched stereotypes discussed below about both middle-class and poor residents of Delhi. Individuals and communities draw upon these easily accessible narratives to fortify their own identities, challenge the claims of others, or alternatively to use these narratives as a foil against which to construct alternative and opposing narratives.

Of Migrants and Delhiites

As discussed in Chapter 1, the period following India's independence and partition from Pakistan marked the beginning of a sharp increase in population wherein Delhi experienced the highest rate of demographic growth among India's major cities which continued well into the 1990s (DuPont 2000: 230). Migration, first by those impacted by Partition violence and more recently by those responding to increasingly widespread urbanization and seeking better economic opportunities, has consistently been a substantial factor in shaping the city's population across social strata. Yet the term "migrant" and the notion of migration is almost exclusively applied to those city residents engaged in the "informal" economy, doing piece-meal and temporary work, or providing "unskilled" labor, and primarily residing in 'slums' and JJ colonies. Similar to the way Americans and Europeans living in African or Asian countries are commonly characterized as "expats" while Africans, Asians, and other peoples of formerly colonized nations who move anywhere are designated "immigrants"; the thousands of middle and upper-class Indians who move to Delhi from other cities or towns to attend the city's many educational institutions, to start businesses, or to work within its "formal" economy are rarely identified as "migrants." This asymmetrical emphasis on the "new-ness" of poor residents while largely ignoring the same fact

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their perceived *dominance* over the city's spaces and not an assertion that that their claims to the city are *illegitimate* or that they don't *belong*.

about middle and upper-class residents breeds an underlying notion that the poor residents are ultimately not *of* Delhi. Moreover, the term *migrant* or *migrant worker* has a further connotation of a rural-to-urban relocation which in turn also marks those designated as "migrants" as not *of* the city. Together, these connotations work to undermine the legitimacy of JJ residents' presence in the city and their claims to its spaces and resources.

Notably, like their poorer counterparts in the "informal" economy, the ethnic or regional identity of middle and upper-class migrants remains intact long after their arrival in Delhi. Particular neighborhoods, commercial districts or occupations are casually referenced as being predominantly populated by people from certain ethnic or regional backgrounds (i.e. Punjabi businessmen; Bengali intellectuals; South Indian IT experts). Indeed, many middle and upper-class Delhiites have established networks and community organizations linked to their ethno-regional roots. However, unlike for poor residents living in Delhi's slums and JJCs, these roots are rarely[88] used to challenge or de-legitimize middle and upper-class residents' claims to the city and its resources or question whether they *belong* in Delhi. Rather, they function as simple signifiers of distinct cultural or regional traditions and histories shared by members of particular communities. In contrast, the conceptualizations that align migrancy with Delhi's poor JJ residents were pervasive among many of my research participants across socio-economic strata and irrespective of whether they were sympathetic or hostile to the struggles of JJ residents.

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[88] It is important to note that particular regional, ethnic, or religious roots are at times used to "other" and de-legitimize the claims of some Delhiites despite socio-economic privilege based on long standing tensions. Particular examples include the common rhetoric that questions the authentic "Indian-ness" and patriotism of Muslims, and the persistence of linguistic chauvinism between Hindi speakers (the official national language of India, and dominant language in Delhi) and speakers of other languages, particularly the Dravidian languages of South India.

During an interview with Mr. A.K. Jain, the former Commissioner of Planning at the DDA, I asked him to explain the difference between "regularization" of "unauthorized"[89] middle/ upper-class houses and businesses, and the official "notification" and "legalization" of JJCs. He began by explaining the common understanding among city planners of how JJCs in Delhi emerge:

> Jhuggis are basically spontaneous. People come as migrants, maybe to work in the construction site, maybe some Commonwealth Games event, come there. They decide to stay back after the work is over…their construction work maybe continues for a year or six months, they decide that they have nothing to earn in their own village and they would be better off in Delhi even if they are a beggar or a street vendor. They can earn 100 maybe 200 Rupees per day, and back in their village they are not able to earn 10 or 20 Rupees per day, so they decide to stay back and they put up some kind of shack from non-building materials, various types of structures, and they occupy very minimal land.

Mr. Jain was arguably the most sympathetic towards the plight of JJ residents in the city of any (former or current) government official that I met during my fieldwork. He was adamant that JJ residents be granted land tenure, that any "rehabilitation" of their homes be in-situ and not displace them to the city's periphery, and that they had a *right* to all of the city's resources. Still, at the root of his conceptualization of JJ residents is his understanding of them as migrants. In contrast, his explanation of the builders and occupants of "unauthorized" colonies in middle and upper-class neighborhoods never addressed who they were and where they came from. There was no question of where they had been living prior to acquiring said "unauthorized" land upon which to build their homes and businesses. The inherent assumption was that they are *from* Delhi.

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[89] 'Unauthorized' colonies are middle or upper-class housing settlements that have been built illegally, often in violation to the Master Plan of Delhi's zoning allowances and building norms. Unlike JJCs which are often built on public/government land, they are often built on private land which has been split into plots and sold off by owners and developers; and through bribes to local officials manage to gain access to all the basic services (water, sewage, electricity) despite being illegal. 'Regularization' refers to the process by which such colonies manage to become officially declared as "legal" (usually years) after their construction on the condition of paying fines and bringing the homes in-line with the city's construction codes. However, the meeting of these conditions is rarely verified prior to 'regularization,' which often occurs in the lead-up to elections as a way of securing residents' votes.

Similarly, during another interview with Mr. Sunil Mehra, a senior town planner with the MCD, he told me while village life was generally healthier and more desirable, people continue to leave their villages and flock to Delhi because the "job potential is enormous" and there are few opportunities in rural areas for income generation and upward mobility. Therefore, as new people come from villages in search of work, first living with others from their village who had come before them and eventually moving out to build jhuggis of their own nearby, JJ clusters and colonies emerge. While Mr. Mehra asserts that as *Indians*, JJ residents have a right to live in the city and earn a livelihood, if the government were able to establish better infrastructure and employment opportunities in villages,[90] they could avoid living in the city altogether and the already overcrowded Delhi would not have to accommodate more migrants. Referencing the lacking development in villages, he told me, "So we have to either stop them over there—or what I see is, people will keep coming here. They will keep coming here, you cannot stop them." Again, while Mr. Mehra broadly points to Delhi's job potential and its draw for migrants, the jobs he references are exclusively jobs in the "informal" economy and the migrants are all JJ residents. Indeed, his assertion that infrastructural improvement in villages would minimize migration illustrates his conceptualization of "migrant" as interchangeable with "JJ resident."

Likewise, the narratives of migration were central in conversations with NGO staff and JJ residents as well. In early February, 2014, I accompanied Shashi, one of CURE's regional managers who oversaw the NGO's activities in several JJCs in North East Delhi to Kalandar Colony to meet with several resident women who routinely participated in CURE initiatives and

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[90] Here Mr. Mehra alludes to the long history of state-led development with an emphasis on capital-intensive industrialization and urbanization that emerged under Nehru early in the post-colonial period. While this industrialization was meant to coincide with rural reforms in land ownership to spur agricultural development and wealth redistribution; the economic and political capital of the land-owning rural elites meant that substantive land reforms were never fully realized. As a result, rural economic and infrastructural development has continued to lag behind its urban counterpart. For further readings on the Developmentalist Indian state and its economic policies see Chatterjee (1998); Khilnani (1999); & Varshney (1998).

constituted a "women's group" within the colony for that purpose. Shashi, who was in her mid-forties, knew all of the women and had a casual and easy rapport with them. Upon our arrival, Bidya-ji invited us to join her and four other women on her rooftop terrace as she dried her hair in the sunlight. While most of us sat on woven mats on the concrete rooftop, two women jointly sat on a cinderblock. Bidya-ji is a grandmother in her late fifties, and had been living in the colony for almost three decades. Her six children and two grandchildren were all born there. Similarly, the other women had also lived in the colony for many years, the shortest tenancy among them being sixteen years. Yet, following a discussion of the ever-present fear of demolitions and removal, the persistence of their migrancy emerged thusly:

Shashi – So have you ever thought, if you are removed from here, what you will do?

Raj – We will see then what to do. Until the time we are able, we will go on living here.

Amarvati – We are teaching our children, we will complete their studies, after that we will see what happens.

Shashi – Because in villages you must be having your own homes.

Raj – Yes there is…for some there are. As of now our children are studying.

Bidya-ji – Everything is there, but there is no livelihood.

Shashi – So you all came here for a livelihood. To educate your children and to earn a livelihood.

Bidya-ji – Husband works here, he called us here, we have children, they are studying here so we will have to live here. As long as the children are studying, we will have to be here.

Meskerem – So you will go back after that?

Bidya-ji – We will see after that if we will live here or leave.

Shashi – Once someone comes to the city, that person does not return.

Raj – No, we do go back.

Shashi – You go for holidays, but you will not be able to go back forever.

Bidya-ji – When we have lived in the city, our children already live in the city…they will not be able to live in the village. But yes we are thinking about it.

This conversation illustrates the shared understanding among both NGO worker and JJ residents that their presence in Delhi remains precarious. Shashi's assumption that the residents of Kalandar Colony have homes waiting for them in their own villages underscores the belief that the city is not their *real* home. Similarly, despite having lived in the city for almost thirty years, Bidya-ji, still spoke of her presence in Delhi as though it were temporary and conditional. All of the women's references to their children's education, as well as Shashi's statement about their migration for livelihoods and education, points to a recurring demand that they justify their presence in the city toward some "productive" ends. Just as women in general must validate their presence in the city's public spaces, JJ resident women must additionally substantiate their presence in Delhi through their children's schooling or the need for livelihoods. It is clear that length of residency alone was inadequate to remove the characterization of the residents of Kalandar Colony as migrants or to classify them as Delhiites. Even while both Shashi and Bidya-ji acknowledge the improbability of the Kalandar Colony residents 'returning' to their ancestral villages, the specter of these imagined *real* homes persists in their shared imaginary and necessitates their ongoing discursive engagement with them as a *legitimate* alternative to the women's *questionable* presence in Delhi. The pervasiveness of this notion that JJ residents' migrancy makes them not *of* Delhi further allows for the framing of any inclusive government policy which incorporates the needs of the city's JJ residents an act of *benevolence* and not necessarily a matter of *rights* or *legitimate belonging*. In turn, even when they are available, this excuses inadequate or sub-par provisions such as understaffed schools and inconsistent sanitation services, or resettlement in the city's peripheries

with no access to livelihoods and basic resources. After all, they are receiving these things "for free" due to the *generosity* of the local government, not because they are *entitled* to them as legitimate residents of the city.

JJCs as Hubs of Crime and Pollution

In addition to the pervasive labeling of JJ residents as migrants, there are also widespread pernicious narratives that characterize JJCs as hubs of pollution and crime and their residents as morally corrupt and dangerous. At times subtle and at others blatant, these narratives are easily accessible to most Delhiites and manifest in contexts ranging from public interest litigations and government policy, to routine interactions between JJ residents and their middle-class employers. As Bhan (2009) and Ghertner (2011) illustrate,[91] the growing proliferation of so-called public interest litigations (PILs) brought by various middle-class resident welfare associations (RWAs) and other civil society organizations against JJCs has resulted in the broad use of the term "pollution" and claims of "environmental protection" as euphemisms for JJ residents and the demolition of JJCs respectively. In December 2013, during a two week workshop titled *A Rights Based Approach to Resettlement: (Inter)national Standards and Local Practices* organized for urban planners working across South Asia, urban planner and SPA visiting professor Banashree Banerjee shared from her extensive experience throughout India implementing various projects designed to improve services for poor urban residents. She shared of some of her interactions with RWAs in middle-class neighborhoods during her participatory BSUP (Basic Services for Urban Poor) projects thusly:

> When talking to certain middle-class residents who had filed a court petition to remove jhuggis, they said '*these people are dirty and thieves*;' but the court files cite "environmentally damaging construction," "improper land use" etcetera. When we offered the solution of environmental upgradation of JJs to 'clean them up,' they

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[91] See section titled *Rights to the City and Legitimate Belonging* in Chapter 1 for discussions on the use of PILs by middle-class urban residents to make claims on city spaces.

responded with '*they are still thieves,*' when asked when the last or any theft had occurred, none could give an example but insisted on their feeling of insecurity and fear of being burgled.

Indeed, the equating of the 'dirtiness' of the physical environment of JJCs to that of JJ residents as well as the extension of the illegality surrounding the construction of JJCs to an overall criminality of JJ residents is recurrent within popular discourse. Little attention is given to the lack of access to adequate sanitation services, safe and functional community toilets, clean water, or connection to the city's sewage system which produce the conditions of squalor in which JJ residents are forced to live. Instead JJ residents are themselves characterized as inherently unhygienic. Moreover, the squalor that is inextricably linked to JJCs in popular discourse is further depicted as perpetually on the verge of overtaking its middle and upper-class surroundings. Perhaps the clearest illustration of this emerges in the language used to describe JJCs in mainstream media. The following are examples of headlines which appeared on *TOI* articles regarding "illegal" JJ settlements during my fieldwork: "Encroachers gobble up heritage" [referring to Hauz Khas monument] (Verma 2013); "Squatters threaten to eat-up Asola greens" [referring to Asola Bhatti wildlife sanctuary] (Nandi 2013); "Encroachment, sewage killing city's water bodies" (Nandi 2013); "Encroachments eat-up slice of history" [referring to monuments in Mehrauli] (Verma 2014). The language of ravenous consumption and destruction employed in these headlines frames JJCs as a dangerous threat to both the history and the future of the city, poised to overtake everything in their path. Such narratives effectively criminalize the "unsightly" conditions of JJCs by framing them as potentially *infectious*.

Similarly, the fact that the vast majority of Delhi's housing is or was illegally constructed,[92] and that there is a significant shortage of alternative low-income housing in the city goes largely

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[92] See Table 2 in chapter 1 for the various categories of "illegal" or "unauthorized" housing that exist in Delhi

unacknowledged in popular discourse. Instead, the "illegal encroachments" of JJCs are used to insinuate the overall unlawfulness of JJ residents. As a result, potential accusations of theft plague JJ resident women who work as domestic workers in middle and upper-class homes. During a walk through Aradhaknagar where we discussed the ongoing struggles of making a sufficient income, Maya told me, "One job is not enough, if we get work, we can do it. But sometimes, this fear is there, in big houses…we don't do it, but our name gets involved in stories of theft." During another conversation, Krishna-ji told me, "We have to cross the railway line to do utensils [house cleaning] in houses, but what kind of work is this? They may call us thieves, they may say bad things about us." Likewise, men living in JJCs are presented as ongoing threats to the safety and "decency" of women living in nearby middle-class neighborhoods and instances such as the Nirbhaya attack wherein the attackers were JJ residents serve to strengthen these stereotypes.

Even among more "sympathetic" planners and government officials, the trope of the JJ resident man as a lazy one who drinks excessively and has little consideration for his wife or his family's financial future emerged repeatedly—often as a way of highlighting the struggles of JJ resident women. Explaining a policy decision by the DDA instituted in 2000 to put deeds of JJ resettlement housing primarily in the name of women, Mr. A.K. Jain told me, "It was again decided that women have more titles to the home than the man, and especially the poor man. You never know, he may get bankrupt, he may get drunk and he will dispose of the property." Similarly, at various points during my interview with MCD senior planner Mr. Sunil Mehra, he repeatedly drew upon his conceptualization of the capriciousness of JJ resident men to emphasize the need for certain policies and initiatives. While telling me of some innovative community based programs in Mumbai's Dharavi slum, he pointed to the necessity of their 'women only' microfinance collective by asserting, "Because here, poor men, they prefer to drink and forget about what their

responsibilities are." Later in the interview, while explaining why educating JJ resident children was the best way to "empower" their mothers and communities, he added, "In our country sometimes the poor husbands they are not considerate for the ladies." Finally, while discussing the policy of putting the deeds of homes in the name of women, he shared the story of his own sister whose husband had unilaterally sold-off their flat forcing them to live as renters for years, and concluded, "So if my own sister, educated—double post-graduate, if a person of that nature can do, you can imagine this type of a man who is so poor, he will say 'whatever money is emanating from this house…I will better sell it off.' People are not considerate about their future. So I would say, it is a very, very, good thing to have a house in lady's name."

Interestingly, while some of the JJ resident women I spoke with also complained about the actions of their husbands and other men from their colonies, their grievances indicated a more complex problem than the supposed inherent 'unreliability' or 'immorality' of the men implied by popular narratives. Instead, many of the women discussed the perpetual insecurity of never having enough income to cover their families' expenses as well as the perennial threat of demolition. Compounding these was the cycle of political campaign promises of housing security and access to basic resources in return for votes inevitably followed by the inaction of politicians once they take office until the next election when the cycle began again. They pointed to these frustrations and the widespread corruption among politicians and government officials as producing the behaviors popularly attributed to poor and JJ resident men such as alcoholism and illicit financial dealings that prove to be detrimental to their own interests. During a small group discussion in Aradhaknagar in March 2014, a long-time resident of the colony in her early fifties named Ganga shared her irritation stating:

> What do these governments do? They give a bottle [alcohol], they give notes [rupees] and buy the votes. The men sell, they sell their vote for alcohol. The

women don't drink. They [politicians] also say 'vote then we will see.' They come with folded hands to ask for votes…and the ones who are behind them, they say, 'come to the corner, we will talk in the corner.' That is what they say. And what happens in the corner? You give money and work will be done. If you don't give money work will not be done. For how many days will the corner ones eat?

Echoing Ganga, Seema indicated that the pervasiveness of corruption and bribery leaves little room for alternatives. She asserts, "That one man…Dr. Nath, said with his chest wide, 'I give money, I take votes!' So who is at fault? Pradhan... maybe pradhan can take...we may also sell. Even very good patriots sell themselves…we are after all normal human beings." Like the other stereotypes of JJ residents discussed above, narratives of morally corrupt and unreliable JJ resident men who sell their votes, or sell the resettlement plots given to them by the government to move back into JJCs ignore the contexts in which JJ residents must make their choices. As Padma told me during one of my visits to Kalandar Colony when I asked her about her views on the flats in multi-story buildings being used in places like Bawana to 'resettle' eligible JJ residents:

If one gets space, if there are 3 sons, then they will build their own stories on top. If it is a flat and there are 3 sons, then where will they live? Because they give one room set, there will be one room, one kitchen and one toilet. With that there will be more poverty…we will have to think for 2 more people. What will these people do? They will sell it and come back *here* only. Many people have done that because *there* they cannot survive, so they gave it, either on rent, or they sold it and came back to the same place, so in this way poverty does not reduce.

Just as their perpetual need for money and the seeming futility of their votes may push some residents to accept bribes of alcohol and money for political support; the inadequacy of the streamlined single-family flats for their extended family households or the isolation of most JJ resettlement colonies from access to jobs, schools, and other resources similarly pushes 'resettled' JJ residents to sell their plots/flats and return to living in JJCs in more accessible locations in the city. However, when presented out of context, these choices can be used to propagate narratives of JJ resident men in particular that further *other* them from 'decent' Delhiites.

Producers or Parasites?

One of the most frequently utilized narrative about JJ residents in Delhi's public discourse was one that framed them as an economic drain on the city's resources. They were consistently presented as "parasites" living freely on the taxes of 'hard-working' middle-class Delhiites. Perhaps because certain claims inherent in this narrative such as government spending on subsidies and "pro-poor" programs or conversely the economic contributions of JJ residents seem more 'objectively' quantifiable than more abstract notions of 'legitimate belonging' or 'morality,' it emerged as a common point of contestation for various perspectives and stakeholders. Many politicians running for office, economists, and other middle-class residents of the city publically decried the economic "unsustainability" and inefficiency of what they characterized as the incumbent Congress Party's "welfare-ist" policies that relied heavily on subsidies for basic resources such as gas cylinders, water, and certain food staples assumed to primarily benefit the city's poor residents.[93] In contrast, NGOs such as PRIA and other middle-class advocates of JJ residents' rights increasingly collected or cited data that illustrated the social and economic contributions of those in the 'informal' sector to dispel popular characterizations of them as 'freeloaders.' Similarly, JJ residents I interacted with often pointed to their own contributions, both in terms of economic productivity as well as the time and investment they had put into constructing their homes and communities, to support their appeals for housing security and better access to basic services.

On October 4th, 2013 I attended a day-long event titled *People Building Better Cities: Understanding Urban Informality, Delhi* at the School for Planning and Architecture marking the

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[93] A 2014 *TOI* article claims that statistically, the primary beneficiaries of most government subsidies are Upper-class households [fuel subsidies], middle-class households [LPG cylinders]; and large-scale farmers [fertilizer subsidies] (Gandhi 2014).

opening of a traveling international exhibition on participatory and inclusive urbanization. Using

data from 'slums' around the world, a major goal of this exhibition was to challenge popular

perceptions of poor urban residents as burdens on city resources. As the first panelist of the event,

Mr. Manoj Rai of the NGO PRIA, explained:

> There is a need to think about informality differently, and I would say positively.
> So far they have been viewed negatively and exclusionarily. If we look at it
> economically, we think 'I have made this contribution [to the city] and I deserve
> this.' But economically, contributions of the informal sector are invisible, so we
> think of inclusiveness as 'resource diversion' or 'redistribution.' We have to use
> data to change perceptions.

Reminiscent of the Women in Development (WID) framework[94] which emerged in the late

twentieth century, organizers and panelists of this exhibition highlighted the productivity of

residents living in 'informal urban settlements' and argued that they are efficient and rational

economic actors, thus offering a narrative shift in which slum and JJ residents were characterized

as economic investments that could be successfully incorporated into the city's growth instead of

as simply vulnerable dependents. Arguing further that the contributions of poor urban residents

weren't simply economic and insisting on their *right* to the city, fellow panelist Dr. Shyamala Mani

of the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) asserted:

> The rich believe that they *own* the city and view these people in the peripheries as
> *outsiders*. They cling to that view and perpetuate it. But if we look at the
> contributions of the urban poor, not just the economic contributions—they are the
> nuts and cogs of any city. They are the ones who run our cities. They've adapted
> their lives to make our daily lives what it is. We should not look at it as if we are
> doing them a favor by inclusive planning, just because they are willing to live in
> inhuman conditions. Being included is their bloody right!

Similarly, other panelists pointed to the 'invisibility' of urban poor residents' contributions, as well

as the lack of proper implementation of "pro-poor" policies, the growth of gated communities in

cities like Delhi, and the increasing criminalization and characterization of JJ residents as "pick-

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[94] For further reading on WID see Kabeer (1994); Razavi & Miller (1995); Chowdhry (1995); and Sharma (2008)

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pockets" by the judiciary, as factors in the ongoing exclusion of urban poor residents from fully accessing the city and benefitting from its 'development.' During an interview with Mr. A.K. Jain, he brought up a similar argument citing surveys conducted in 2001 while he was on the board reviewing the Master Plan of Delhi, stating:

> We also realized during these surveys that these people [JJ residents] are consuming not more than five percent of the city land, not more than five percent of the electricity and water…useful water, and they are contributing…I don't remember 1/3, at that time it was something like 1/3 of the GDP of the city. So that means that at a very low cost you [non-JJ residents] are getting the services of the city. So they are part of the city…They have a *right to the city*. So this is something for which we have to give much more priority.

This argument, consistent with the others presented above, uses evidence of productivity, economic or otherwise, to assert that JJ residents have legitimate rights to the city because of their quantifiable contributions to it.

Accordingly, PRIA partnered with the economic research firm Indicus Analytics to conduct a study of 'informal settlements' across the country's fifty largest cities with the aim of collecting primary data about the socio-economic realities of slums and JJCs. The study found that residents of informal settlements contribute 7.53% to the urban GDP of India (PRIA 2013: Summary). In the months that followed the report's release in November 2013, this statistic was widely publicized in national newspapers and debated in various public forums among urban planners, politicians, and economists. During a private interview with Mr. Rai the following spring, he told me that twenty newspapers published the findings of the report among which seven put the story on their national cover-page across all of their publications. He further mentioned that a month after the release of the study's findings, he received a call from the Finance Ministry requesting a copy of the full report to respond to a question regarding the economic contribution of urban poor residents which had been recently raised in Parliament. Interestingly, other

significant findings of this study were rarely mentioned, such as the finding that in million-plus population cities like Delhi nearly 40% of the households live in slums or JJCs; or that 36% of slums nationally do not have access to electricity, tap water, or sanitation within homes; that while a sizable proportion of the informal settlement population are migrants, the majority are 'permanent migrants' who have lived in the city for years; or that 40% of the "non-informal" settlement (i.e. middle and upper-class) sample households surveyed thought that their daily lives would be adversely affected if "informal settlements" and their residents were 'removed' (Ibid).[95]

Nevertheless, the deep-seated narratives of JJ residents as burdens on the city's economy persisted in popular discourse. While at times these narratives emerged alongside the narratives of blight and pollution discussed in the previous section, they also manifested in the framing of any "pro-poor" policies as charity or undeserved gains. 'Resettlement,' despite the violence of demolition it entails and the fact that most JJ residents in Delhi do not meet eligibility requirements for resettlement housing which in-turn often results in their homelessness, is almost exclusively framed as a 'benefit' or 'free housing.' During the urban planning workshop on a "rights-based approach to resettlement" discussed in the previous section, the director of the newly formed Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) Mr. S.K. Mahajan and his colleague Mr. Atul gave a presentation on the various activities of DUSIB. The language used by Mr. Atul during the presentation and in response to workshop participants' questions was particularly illustrative of the common notion that JJ residents are exaggerating or faking neediness to reap undeserved free benefits from the government. While describing the various components of the night shelters that

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[95] Overview of major findings and link to full report available at:
https://terraurban.wordpress.com/2013/12/18/economic-contribution-of-the-urban-poor/

DUSIB provides to the homeless,[96] he pointed out, "*Just imagine*, we are providing Arrow[97] [filtered] water to them…even the people in our homes are not getting Arrow water and we are providing this to them, and we are providing toilets, and electricity as well." Later, when a workshop participant suggested that the 70,000 rupee "beneficiary contribution," that DUSIB requires JJ residents to pay towards the cost of a flat as a condition of resettlement, might be unaffordable for them, he dismissed the suggestion thusly:

> Average income of Delhiites is 2 lakhs[98] per year. Why are people always migrating to Delhi? It's because you can always find a job and make enough… Yesterday we visited a slum cluster in Vasant Kunj, and actually it doesn't look like a slum at all. They had split A/C there…*Yes, split A.C. in the jhuggi*!

Finally, when another participant pointed out that households in multi-generational JJCs are often able to add stories to their homes as their families expand and asked if the possibility for acquiring more space or an additional flat exists as families of resettled JJ residents grow, Mr. Atul replied:

> Frankly, that possibility does not exist. We are trying to help this one generation and telling their children, next generation to 'please grow-up yourself,' because it is not sustainable. Otherwise, we will have people with an income, tax-payers like me financing the life of those who don't work.

In these two quotes we see contradictory assertions. While Mr. Atul implies in the first statement that JJ residents make enough income to afford a 70,000 rupee fee for a flat, in the second statement he asserts that these same JJ residents "don't work" and thus presumably have no income. Despite this contradiction, these statements nonetheless work together to perpetuate the larger narrative of JJ residents as lazily living off of the taxes paid by hard-working middle-class residents like Mr. Atul. Moreover, the ever-present threat of demolitions and the lack of access to sanitation services,

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[96] Homelessness is often induced by JJ demolitions in Delhi.

[97] Arrow is a popular water filter brand commonly found in middle-class homes.

[98] A 'lakh' is equivalent to 100,000.

or in-home toilets, which have all otherwise been widely documented and recognized, are conveniently ignored to point to the possession of consumer goods like AC units or mobile phones or the fact that a JJC doesn't "look like a slum" as evidence that vulnerability and need are fabrications of JJ residents. Even among NGO workers who regularly work in JJCs and witness the daily struggles of those residents, this notion that they can somehow "work harder" to improve their lot and manage to find better housing appears. During the discussion about demolitions with Shashi of CURE and the Kalandar colony resident women referenced previously, Shashi said to the women, "There is a thought that 'government will remove us from here but will give us a place.' But another thing is 'with our own hard work, we can get a place…the life that we spend should not be the life of our children.'" Her statement suggests that, rather than waiting for the government to 'give' them new housing, the JJ residents could or should 'work hard' to get a 'legal' home for the sake of their children. The embedded implication being that the JJ resident women *aren't* working [as] hard [as they could] and that they aren't *already* attempting to make a better life for their children than their own. Like Mr. Atul's assertions, Shashi's statement, although less vehement, also draws upon this notion that JJ residents receive or anticipate government 'handouts' in lieu of hard work.

In contrast, during a private interview in January 2014, the director of CURE Dr. Renu Khosla pushed back against indictments of subsidies for the poor and narratives of JJ residents expecting free 'handouts' from the governments, asserting:

> Economists come in and say that these are subsidy based models and we are emptying the city's treasury and we can't be on this subsidy mode – I actually disagree with that to the extent that, [its] because you aren't targeting your subsidies properly. Poor are willing to pay. But they're not willing to pay…but *they are unwilling to pay for bad quality service*. We've done a lot of these 'willingness to pay' studies. People are actually paying. If they're not paying for the actual water, or even for procuring water, then they're paying in terms of health costs and low productivity.

Similarly, JJ residents I spoke with often pointed to their obvious neglect by government institutions and service providers, as well as their own investment of time and energy in constructing their homes to dispel narratives of laziness, 'freeloading,' and claims that they receive special advantages from the state. The residents of Kalandar colony I spoke with emphasized the fact that their homes, which were overwhelmingly *kutcha* or *pukka* constructed of permanent or semi-permanent materials like brick and concrete, and many of which had two or more stories, had been built entirely by them gradually over the decades without the help of any NGO or government agency. Several of the families had even managed to build in-home toilets, although their limited access to materials and their inability to access the city's sewer system meant that the toilets they were able to build by placing sewage tanks directly below their homes had compromised the foundation of their jhuggis and resulted in some of the sewage seeping up into the walls. The residents had also constructed a small Hindu temple and a small mosque within the JJC which they maintained impeccably. In contrast, they pointed to the minimal 'development' the government had provided in terms of sanitation services and sewage removal. Likewise, Krishna-ji from Aradhaknagar once pointed out a collapsing gutter and asked me, "This colony is not from today, it is at least 70-80 years old…it is more, we were born here, we got married here, and our great grandchildren are being born here. Now you tell me, has anything been done here?"

Yet, even the existence of agencies like DUSIB who work exclusively on issues of housing for the city's poor residents was at times framed as evidence of the unique advantage of poor JJ residents. During our interview, as Mr. Mehra of the MCD explained the jurisdictional divisions between the DDA, MCD, and DUSIB, he paused to make the following remark: "Now here the board [DUSIB] is specifically for the poorest lot. There is no board for other—like even no other group is being *catered* by…" [*Emphasis added*] Similarly, in a February 16, 2014 *TOI* segment

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titled *Aam Aadmi Divided* wherein reporters asked Delhiites on the streets whether or not they would vote for Arvind Kejriwal of AAP again following his resignation, a woman named Radhika Malhotra who identified herself as a food blogger stated, "I will not vote for him as people living in *planned* colonies aren't on his agenda" (Aam Aadmi Divided 2014). Mr. Rai of PRIA seemed to be responding to these narratives that JJ residents' concerns have superseded that of other groups in socio-political discourse when he emphasized to me that his organization's focus on the economic contribution of urban poor residents and calls for equitable access to basic resources are not attempts to disempower middle-class residents, stating "Our role is not that 'okay crush the city and build an empire for the poor.' No!"

Visions of a 'Slum-Free' City

In October 2013, I visited the Katha Lab School operated by the NGO Katha inside the Govindpuri JJC in South Delhi. This K-12 school, whose students are residents of the surrounding JJC, opened in the late 1980s and is known for its focus on literacy and storytelling as well as its innovative pedagogy which incorporates real-world experiential learning. During my visit, I observed an 11th grade Vikas [Development] class. The teacher, who appeared to be in her twenties, began by stating, "Vikas bahut zaruri hai [development is very necessary]" after which she began dictating notes on topics ranging from deforestation to issues of basic necessities such as access to water, electricity, and sanitation. This included statements about how development should happen (I.e. "...hona chahiye"). After explaining different ways that 'development' can improve the standard of living, she concluded her lecture with the declaration "Jhuggi jhopri katam ho jayega [JJs will end]" and asked the students "Bharat vikshit desh hai ya vikashi? [Is India a developed country or a developing country?]" As soon as she asked the question, the students' responses erupted into a lively debate.

The classroom scene described above is illustrative of the widely touted notions surrounding the importance and inevitability of 'development,' particularly within India's major cities. As discussed in Chapter 1, during India's post-liberalization period (which began in 1991), there has been a shift in popular discourse towards a narrative of 'developing' Delhi into a "global" or "world-class" city. This has coincided with the parallel rise in demands among middle and upper-class urban residents for aesthetics associated with "global cities" such as high-rise buildings and fly-overs, as well as the elimination of slums and JJCs presumably 'marring' the city landscape. In 2011, the central government launched what it called a "Slum-free India" initiative which included various housing, services, and livelihoods schemes for poor urban residents living in slums and JJCs. Indeed, the Katha school teacher's declarations that "JJs will end" is a nod to this widely publicized venture. The surprisingly progressive mission statement of this venture proclaims an intent to create a "Slum-free India with inclusive and equitable cities in which every citizen has access to basic civic and social services and decent shelter," and identifies the shortage of affordable housing in cities as well as other "failures of the formal system" as root causes for the formation of slums and forcing poor urban residents to resort to "extra-legal solutions in a bid to retain their source of livelihood and employment" (MHUPA 2014: 92). The explicit aim of the 'Slum-free India' venture is to eliminate the structural inequalities that have trapped urban slum and JJ residents in a perpetual cycle of poverty and sub-standard housing and instead create institutions and policies that allow them to equally access all the resources and opportunities that 'ought' to be available to all 'citizens.'

Nevertheless, the persistent characterizations of slum and JJ residents as migrants, polluters, criminals, and 'parasites' along with middle and upper-class residents' demands for "global-city" aesthetics has resulted in the transformation of the phrase "slum-free India" to mean

the removal of slum and JJ *residents* from the city, not just the removal of "slum-like" conditions. Rather, JJCs and their residents are framed as major obstacles to the espoused aspirations of making Delhi a "world-class city" (Tarlo (2003); Bhan (2009); Ghertner (2011)). Moreover, while the often cited reason for the removal of JJCs was the claim that land had become scarce in Delhi with the implication that JJCs were occupying much of it, planners such as Banashree Banerjee and A.K. Jain pointed out that in actuality JJCs occupy no more than five percent of the city's land. In fact, newspapers such as the *TOI* contained daily advertisements for large housing developments being built in the suburban peripheries of the city such as Noida and Gurgaon. It eventually became apparent that, in addition to the growing desire for "global city" aesthetics, a more accurate explanation for the growing push towards the removal of slums was not the *amount* of space they occupied but rather their desirable location. While many of the older JJCs had been built on what were peripheries of middle and upper-class neighborhoods at the time and which constituted sources of livelihood for many of the JJ residents, as the city expanded around them, they had now come to occupy central locations with high real estate values. In turn, this has made such JJCs of particular interest for private developers, who otherwise have difficulty acquiring 'prime' land in the city, and government agencies such as the DDA and DUSIB who can fulfil their mandates of "slum redevelopment" and building a 'global city,' with minimal cost to them by partnering with private developers through the increasingly popular Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. As Banerjee used the example of what was slotted to become Delhi's first PPP for an in-situ 'slum redevelopment' to point out:

> There was no way that private developers would find land in Delhi to develop. So this whole PPP model gives them the access to land in central areas which were actually occupied by slums. Now if you look at this Kathputli[99] Colony which is

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[99] '*Kathputli*' means 'puppet' in Hindi. As the name suggests, Kathputli Colony is a longstanding JJC in Central/West Delhi which houses puppeteers, magicians, musicians, and other performers. In addition to being residences, the JJs and alleyways of Kathputli Colony also serve as places for the residents to construct and store

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the first one...It's very centrally located. Now it's that area which has been selected and Raheja is the developer. What they're doing is, they are going to *pack* all of the slum dwellers in 60 percent of the land which they occupy now-- it's already a pretty high density area-- in ten-storied apartments. And in the remaining area they're going to build up the tallest structure in Delhi, a 56-storied apartment building.

She further explains that while the proposed new apartment building for the Kathputli Colony residents would be particularly impractical considering their need for a multi-purpose space wherein to construct and store the tools of their trade; the corresponding 56-story luxury apartment building dubbed "Navneen Minar" or "Phoenix Tower" equipped with plans for a helipad, would contain massive flats each occupying the space of up-to ten jhuggis. Such plans for exclusive luxury apartments which reserve significant chunks of the city's land for a few residents while displacing or 'packing' dozens of JJ residents into an even smaller area belies the claim that JJC removal is an attempt to maximize the city's 'scarce' land.

Banerjee adds that when urban planners reviewed the Master Plan of Delhi several years back and alternatively suggested that a more functional and efficient approach would be a low-rise high-density development wherein existing residential areas could be densified with new housing and their infrastructure improved, the Minister of Urban Development insisted that a "globalizing" city should have high-rises, declaring "Here we are trying to be a global city and the planners keep holding us back." Similarly, Sunil Mehra of the MCD illustrated the ways in which narratives of land scarcity and perceptions of 'global city' aesthetics combine to perpetuate the notion that the removal of slums and JJCs or the relocation of their residents to high-rise apartments is necessary for the development of the city. First, while discussing the problems with relocating JJ residents to the peripheries of the city, Mr. Mehra told me, "If we relocate them, they lose their job, they go

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their puppets, musical instruments and other props used in their performances. Some examples of these include large *dhol* drums, stilts, and performing animals like snakes and monkeys.

too far away from the main area, but they vacate the very prime location, space which is very valuable. But the problem is that they will face difficulties." Later, he pointed to the presumed shortage of land in the city and offered high-rise flats as the preferable alternative to relocating JJ residents, saying:

> Nowadays in *Dilli*, we do not allow more slums to come, *thik hai-na* [*Okay*]? We do not allow for the reason that land has become very precious and there is very strict direction that no squatting will be allowed of this manner. People are many, land is scarce. So what I had started when I was over there in the Slum Department,[100] I proposed to construct 24 story building for poor people. ::*chuckles*:: Nobody agreed to the idea. They said 'who will maintain the lift?' Maintaining a lift is such a petty thing!

The ongoing narrative that land in Delhi is scarce, and that the way to solve this perceived problem is to target slums and JJCs which occupy only five percent of the city's land rather than to look at the other ninety-five percent frames JJCs and their residents as obstacles to the growth and development of the city. Additionally, the shared imaginary of "world-class cities" as being constituted by streamlined high-rise buildings which are often in conflict with the practical needs of JJ residents who require adaptable multi-use spaces, further positions JJCs and their residents as impediments to the actualization of Delhi as a 'slum-free global city.'

Together, the various narratives discussed thus far in this chapter—those that characterize slum and JJ residents as migrants, polluters, criminals, parasites, and obstacles to the city's development, work together to question and de-legitimize the presence and ultimately the claims of Delhi's poor residents. By framing JJCs and their residents as fundamentally *not of* the city, and even more so as being detrimental to the city's spatial, moral, and economic future, these popular narratives challenge their *legitimate belonging* in Delhi. Consequently, following the assertion of

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[100] Referring to the former *Slum and JJ Department* which was alternatively housed in the MCD or the DDA from 1962-2010. For further information see the 'Important Notes about Local Bureaucratic Structures and Legal Terminology' section of chapter 1.

Zérah et al that 'urban citizenship' is primarily predicated on *legitimacy* rather than legality (2011:4), I argue that the aforementioned narratives collectively work to challenge JJ residents' claims to the entitlements that such citizenship confers including access to the city's spaces, housing, and basic services. Nevertheless, JJ residents and their allies push-back against these narratives by offering counter-narratives of their economic and social productivity, and their investment in the construction and maintenance of their JJCs. They further utilize these counter-narratives to bolster their claims to the city's spaces and resources. As such, claims-making—whether through routine bureaucratic interactions or in moments of heightened tension during demolition drives—emerges as a frequent site wherein such narratives are deployed and urban citizenship and legitimate belonging are actively contested and negotiated.

Claims-Making through Alternating Approaches

The success of [political] claims depends entirely on the ability of particular population groups to mobilize support to influence the implementation of governmental policy in their favor. But this success is necessarily temporary and contextual.

<div align="right">

Partha Chatterjee (2004: 60)

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Whether characterized as *political society* (Chatterjee 2004) or *insurgent citizens* (Holston 2008), various scholars have noted the differential access that poor and marginalized populations have to bureaucratic institutions, governmental services, and full citizenship rights more broadly (Appadurai (2001); Das (2004); Caldeira (2001); Miraftab & Wills (2005); Wacquant (2008)). Correspondingly, their limited access to formal systems of property and judicial recourse often requires that slum and JJ residents actively negotiate for governmental recognition and entitlements through variously framed individual or collective claims. Such claims may be deployed through the use of prior documentation or conditional bureaucratic recognition to establish precedence and length of tenancy, citing personal or collective contribution and investment in the city; drawing broadly on national or universal rights; or illustrating one's

suffering and vulnerability to appeal to the collective conscience of fellow city-dwellers and government officials. Moreover, the limited social and economic capital of JJ residents necessitates, as the introductory quote from Chatterjee suggests, that they effectively mobilize the support of more powerful 'stakeholders'—government officials, politicians, NGOs, as well as middle and upper-class Delhiites. To explore the ways in which JJ residents and their allies attempt to do this, I approach their claims-making as a rhetorical activity aimed at persuading particular and at times multiple audiences. My approach broadly draws upon social constructionist theories that assert that popular understandings of 'social problems' are constructed through the definitional processes and interactional activities of claims-making (Spector and Kitsuse 1987), as well as scholarship which examines the functions of narrative and rhetorical aspects of such claims-making (Best (1987); Mulcahy (1995); Fortmann (1995)). Furthermore, I diverge from Chatterjee (2004) and others who designate the primarily immediate-needs driven claims-making activities of poor marginalized peoples (whom Chatterjee calls 'political society') as that of 'populations' negotiating over how they will be 'governed,' and as qualitatively different from the claims of elite groups or 'civil society' as that of *citizens* politically engaging the rights endowed to them as such. Instead, while recognizing the differential access to full citizenship rights by poor marginalized peoples and their treatment by the state, I follow Das and Randeria (2015) in the assertion that 'governance' and politics are "not two distinct domains but deeply made up by the relation they bear to each other" (S7). Accordingly, the negotiations, improvisations, and rhetorical activities deployed by JJ residents in their attempts to secure space and resources in the city can be understood as political engagement which works to stretch the limits and possibilities of 'formal' politics.

The Language of Suffering and Appeals to Conscience

Social feeling is understood as the foundation of civil society, an emotional connectivity that underlies pro-social action. These 'ordinary affects' are commonly expressed in the concept of empathy, a transpersonal state of emotional extensiveness.

Gillian Swanson (2013:126)

There is a long history of the use of narratives of suffering, injustice, and appeals to conscience in efforts to mobilize audiences to act within social movements throughout the world, including the Abolitionist and Civil Rights movements of the United States, the Palestinian National Movement, the Gandhian *Satyagraha* approach during India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule, and the international Human Rights movement[101] which emerged after WWII. Whether through publically recounting experiences of violence and inhuman conditions, documenting and exposing images of the same, or through non-violent resistance and social disobedience which places into stark contrast the brutality of oppressors; social movements throughout history have utilized both verbal and visual illustrations of suffering to simultaneously legitimize their claims and condemn the status quo by appealing to the emotions and the *humanity* of the societies from which they emerge. It is thus, to this *political* deployment of the language of suffering that I attempt to draw a link from that utilized by JJ residents in Delhi during interactions with NGO staff, media, government officials, middle-class activists, and researchers like myself. In contrast to the fetishized depiction of their suffering in international media,[102] I argue that JJ residents use storytelling and testimony to move their audiences to act, as agentive but marginalized actors.

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[101] It is important to note that while each of the social movements described here are presented in the singular to point to the historic use of narratives of suffering and injustice, they should not be thought of as monolithic but rather as heterogeneous and constituted by various, and at times contradictory, ideologies and organizing strategies.

[102] I refer here to the voyeurism of so-called 'poverty porn' wherein slums and JJs become the fetishized loci of misery and victimhood. Examples of such commodified suffering include the success of books and films like *Shantaram* and *Slumdog Millionaire* as well as 'slum-tours' which are becoming increasingly popular around the world.

During my extended interactions with residents of Aradhaknagar and Kalandar Colony, as well as my shorter visits to Kathputli Colony, stories of suffering and injustice were often recounted by residents within different conversational and social contexts. At times they were interwoven within casual conversations about everyday life, at others they were used to frame persistent problems and emphasize the need for change or make a call for action. Also, while the ongoing research context of my interactions with the women in Aradhaknagar and Kalandar Colony meant that I was the explicit audience for many of these narratives, it also became clear that the speakers were at times also addressing accompanying NGO staff and fellow JJ residents. In the context of Kathputli Colony (discussed in-detail below), the audience further included journalists and their readers/viewers, government officials, and other 'concerned' individuals locally and internationally. Moreover, while JJ residents at times recounted specific stories or experiences, they more commonly used a general language of suffering and injustice to draw attention to their ongoing plight or to reaffirm their shared oppression with one another. During one of my earlier visits to Aradhaknagar, Krishna-ji matter-of-factly explained the ubiquity of suffering in the lives of poor people while we stood with several other resident women on a wide street at the edge of the colony. She declared:

> Be it any [JJ] colony, the poor people, 'medium' size people, they have only problems and problems…so much burden. First, there is this burden of high prices, then there is the burden of running one's household, then the third burden, that we are not demolished…we don't lose our roof. Then say, what will the poor man do? Tension is everywhere, and in tension then there is high 'BP' and then there are diseases and diseases.

Here, while Krishna-ji may have been telling me (the outsider) about the struggles that she and her neighbors experience, she is also reflecting on and acknowledging the suffering she shares with the other women present. Indeed, they are her primary audience in this instance and her statement functions similarly to self-directed protest rhetoric of social movements which 'constitutes

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selfhood through expression' (Stewart 1999: 91). Particularly, by recognizing and proclaiming their shared suffering, such statements help to build a foundation upon which collective claims can be made. Later during this same conversation when the discussion turned towards the lack of political will to address the problems of JJ residents, a resident in her early forties named Rajwati asserted, "There are too many jhuggis in Delhi, there is no counting. There are crores[103] of them. We all go to vote... they [politicians] win from us only... they win because of poor, and they cut the poor's stomachs [*pedh kathna*]!" Similar to Krishna-ji's statement, Rajwati's declaration of injustice and suffering was also directed at her fellow JJ residents and works not only to reaffirm a shared oppression but also to point out the collective power of JJ residents as voters and its exploitation.

In contrast to the above examples which illustrate the use of broad narratives of suffering and injustice within self-directed rhetoric to coalesce a shared identity of oppression, similar language was also directed at other audiences in seeming attempts to garner empathy and petition for change. During a group discussion with some Kalandar Colony residents about their struggles with accessing important services, Padma stated how the nearby government hospital continually placed the lives of poor neighborhood residents at risk with its underqualified medical staff and their general apathy towards poor patients. After other residents added that the medical staff at the hospital works by 'trial and error,' Padma nodded in agreement and recounted a personal story of loss in relation to the hospital:

> Recently when my *jethani*[104] died, this is what happened with her. She had a heart attack and we took her. While they kept looking and looking… she went. I have seen so many people like this and so many have died. In their hands, so many have died.

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[103] 'Crore' is equivalent to 10,000,000
[104] 'Jethani' is a kinship term denoting the wife of one's husband's elder brother (i.e. sister-in-law).

Adding to Padma's story, Mahesh, a man in his late sixties, as well as a long-time resident and self-described pradhan of the colony, shared his own ongoing struggle to get proper medical care for his ailing son. After the nearby hospital misdiagnosed his son multiple times and prescribed him the wrong medication, he had finally managed to find a private clinic to accurately diagnose his son and, having spent much of his savings, was awaiting his son's operation. He told me that he had returned to the nearby hospital and confronted the staff asking, "How many people will you kill like this by giving wrong medicines?" The context in which these stories were told offers an important indication of their intended audience and potential function. As this was my initial visit to the colony, I had accompanied Sukant and Ramesh (CURE regional managers) as well as Lalita and Ganga (CURE field-staff) while they introduced me to various residents and asked them to sit and talk with us. Indeed, the fact that the two upper-level NGO staff present were men was likely the reason that Mahesh joined the discussion at all, as no other men (including Mahesh) were interested in participating in my research during any of my subsequent visits to the colony. I would thus posit that the primary audience for the above stories about the residents' suffering at the hands of the nearby government hospital were the NGO staff and the institution they represented. CURE's active presence in Kalandar Colony for the preceding six years, its established working relationship with government agencies like DUSIB, and its historical willingness to serve as a liaison between JJ residents and local government meant that the NGO could conceivably use its networks to make inquiries into the hospital's administration. Accordingly, I further posit that the language of suffering used by Padma and Mahesh thus served as rhetorical devices utilizing *pathos* in service of their attempts to access improved medical care. This is not to imply that their storytelling was disingenuous. It was clear that the stories of personal suffering and loss they shared were sincere. Rather, like all claims-makers, they used their own personal experiences and

observations of others' interactions with their target audience to determine the most effective way to make their claims heard.

As Best points out, "claims-makers articulate their claims in ways that they find (and believe their audiences will find) persuasive" (1987: 18). Considering the previously discussed dominant narratives of JJ residents in Delhi that suggest that they fabricate or exaggerate their vulnerability to receive government concessions, as well as the limited accessibility of formal legal recourse for JJ residents due to their lack of social and economic capital, it follows that appealing to the sympathies and collective conscience of those with administrative power (or those who could potentially influence it) serves as one of the few accessible avenues through which to pursue various claims. Furthermore, as Bhan (2014) notes using a 2007 Delhi High Court decision to demolish a JJC in west Delhi,[105] the presence of multi-story jhuggis and the use of jhuggis for commercial activities can effectively be utilized to de-legitimize JJ residents claims of economic deprivation and generally erase their vulnerability (554-555). This is similarly illustrated by the comments of DUSIB's Mr. Atul discussed above, wherein he pointed to the presence of air-conditioners in jhuggis as proof that their claims of economic vulnerability were illegitimate. Thus, the deployment of the language of suffering by JJ residents further attempts to counteract these erasures of vulnerability by government officials and judiciary by pointing to the various structural realities that continue to marginalize them despite an incremental rise in economic security that may allow them to purchase consumer goods or expand their jhuggis.

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[105] *Kalyan Sanstha Social Welfare Organization vs. Union of India and Ors* (2007)

A Rights-Based Approach

Constitution of India 1949
Article 21. *Protection of life and personal liberty: No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law*
Article 39. *The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing:*
*(**b**) That the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good;*
*(**c**) That the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

Article 21(2). *Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.*
Article 25(1). *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*

While poor Delhiites have limited access to legal protections and recognitions *in practice*, the articles of the Indian constitution cited above along with those of the UDHR to which India is an original signatory, indicate that there are legal precedents for rights based claims of JJ and slum residents. NGO workers, urban planners, and activists with varying sympathies towards JJ and slum residents often cited one or more of these codified rights when they discussed government policy towards them. As Sunil Mehra of the MCD told me:

> You see, Indian Constitution guarantees… it gives many rights. We enjoy more rights here. More than Europe or the U.S. There are many articles that guarantee women and different castes…many rights, such as article 21. This is why we give liberty for such [JJ] clusters to emerge. We usually don't remove because we believe they have *a right to live* also… as per our constitution as I have explained to you before, there are various articles which empower them, every citizen has rights for certain facilities and things like that.

Prior to the more recent trend within the Indian judiciary to criminalize JJs and their residents, it was indeed the 'right to life' guaranteed by article 21 of the Indian Constitution that justices in the landmark 1985 PIL case *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation* cited to declare that the displacement of JJ residents following the demolition of their JJCs infringed on their ability to

make a livelihood which in turn constituted a violation of their right to life (Ramanathan 2005: 2909). While the judicial consensus seems to have shifted away from this perspective (Bhan 2009), the broad framing of JJ demolition and displacement, and to a lesser extent issues of access to basic resources, as a matter of the basic right to life persisted among many of my research participants. This framework was the underlying premise of the urban planning workshop I attended in Delhi titled *A Rights Based Approach to Resettlement: (Inter)national Standards and Local Practices* sponsored by IHS and SPA, as well as the international exhibit on inclusive urbanization titled *Building Better Cities.* Particularly, larger organizations advocating for extensive policy and civic reform like PRIA, as well as individuals working within the context of city-scale projects such as urban planners, regularly deployed the language of rights and government obligations when discussing JJ residents and their access to housing and basic resources. While discussing the role of urban planners in creating inclusive cities, former DDA Commissioner of Planning A.K. Jain stated:

> We as planners, we have to focus much more on the poor people, and especially if I'm a planner for the government. If I'm not able to focus my attention on the poor people, I'm not doing justice to my position, because the rich people can take care. There's a very vibrant private sector that can bring luxury apartments, commercial centers, entertainment centers, everything. But who is there for taking care of the poor people? It is the government's responsibility. If the government is not able to take their responsibility, they don't have the right to exist. *The government does not have the right to exist.*

Similarly, Manoj Rai of PRIA, explained to me the overall aims of the organization as centered on increasing citizen participation in the overall governance through their incorporation into decision-making processes as well as ensuring that the country's democratic institutions are capable, responsive, and accountable to people and protective of their rights. He described their work during election season thusly:

In different districts we are inviting political parties and [poor urban] communities face-to-face and facilitating a dialogue. That "if you win the election, what will you do?" And their conversation is not about subsidies and gas cylinders. *The conversation is in terms of rights*. The conversation is in terms of basic services. Conversation is about dignity, identity and advancement of life, security. These are the conversations.

In contrast, the NGO CURE works closely with specific JJ colonies doing smaller-scale community level projects. The director of the organization, Renu Khosla told me that they do not use a rights-based approach or explicitly discuss rights, even though she believes that JJ residents are entitled to basic services and a certain quality of life. It seemed that this approach was primarily in service of bureaucratic efficacy. As an example, she pointed to the Right to Information Act (RTI) of 2005, which was designed to promote transparency and accountability in government and allowed citizens to file RTI forms with government agencies to get access to information about ongoing projects, public interest court proceedings, or government norms and policies. The RTI was quite popular among middle-class CBOs and RWI's during my time in Delhi, and often featured in stories about uncovered government corruption in the *TOI*. Khosla told me that CURE only used the RTI sparingly, stating:

> What RTI helped was to give us the – at least give us information on the standards and the norms. What the RTI *did not do* was to actually translate that into services on the ground. We haven't really used RTI as much as – we try to use more the process of legislation with the state and the city to move services there. We also believe that RTIs can also annoy the service providers, so then they can become revengeful, and as an organization we don't get into the activist mode.

Because a rights-based approach could be interpreted as antagonistic by local government agencies and service providers, it could prove to be counter-effective in terms of accessing services and resources. JJ residents, particularly like the women of Aradhaknagar and Kalandar Colony who participated in my study, had little in terms of leverage or legal recognition to confront government agencies head-on with rights-based demands for housing tenure or access to services. Instead,

negotiations for specific services such as electricity or water, or resources such as ration cards tended to occur on the household level through repeated visits and bribes to area pradhans and MLA's who functioned as bureaucratic intermediaries.[106] Heitmeyer and Unnithan (2015) note a similar distinction between the use of the language of rights and the language of needs among legal activist groups and NGOs in Delhi and Rajasthan addressing issues of maternal and reproductive health. Particularly, they assert that while the language of rights is primarily utilized by advocates attempting to change national level policies with regards to maternal health for poor women, those working on a local level dealing directly with women struggling with accessing their reproductive rights due to a variety of obstacles including family intervention tended to frame their claims in the language of needs and justice (Ibid: 379).

Nevertheless, there were certain contexts in which JJ residents deployed the language of rights in their claims-making. The most common context involved occupation based organizing. Similar to the street hawkers in Mumbai discussed by Anjaria (2011) and Rajagopal (2001), street vendors, *kabadiwallahs*[107], and women involved with local chapters of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), who lived primarily in Delhi JJCs were often able to organize and utilize their occupational (i.e. productive) identities to deploy rights-based demands for improved working conditions, specific concessions, or legal recognition. Moreover, occupational identities which are linked to caste identities—as with many occupations which involve direct contact with substances considered 'unclean' and have thus historically been the burden of the lower castes,

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[106] For discussions of such negotiations, see the '*Bechara:' Intersections of Gender and Poverty within a Bureaucratic Matrix* section of Chapter 3.

[107] 'Kabadiwallah' is a Hindi term often translated as 'rag-picker' or 'waste-picker' which is the occupational title of manual sanitation workers who collect, sort or 'scavenge' through, and dispose of garbage. Such manual sanitation work has historically been ascribed to so-called "untouchable" castes or Dalits, and contemporary *Kabadiwallah's* are still predominately Dalits. In Delhi, they are mostly of the *Balmiki* or *Chura* sub-caste

including waste removal and working with animal hides—provide even more salient shared identities around which to organize.[108]

In October 2013, the city's thousands of *kabadiwallahs* voiced their rejection of the newly drafted Municipal Solid Waste Rules which side-lined the work they do in collecting and recycling waste and instead only recognized the private companies contracted under the MCD. On October 23, 2013, a union named the All India Kabadi Mazdoor Mahasang with a membership of 17,000[109] people, organized a public meeting in Delhi attended by local 'waste management experts' to point to the many contributions of the city's *kabadiwallahs* and to demand changes in the municipal solid waste regulations (Nandi 2013). Pointing to their contribution towards reducing pollution and minimizing landfills through waste-segregation and recycling in contrast to the pollution *producing* waste-to-energy plants, they demanded the decentralization of waste-management to the ward level, that they be provided equipment and space to process dry waste collected from homes, that the government stop all support of waste-to-energy plants, and that *kabadiwallahs* be incorporated fully into the municipal solid waste plan.

Similarly, between January and February of 2014, street venders of Delhi organized through the National Alliance of Street Venders of India (NASVI) conducted multiple protests, including a hunger-strike at Jantar Mantar[110] and a march to the gates of a police station which had recently evicted 200 street-vendors in South Delhi's Chhatarpur, to demand the passage of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill which had been

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[108] As an example, see Omar Kutty's (2006) essay on his research among Balmiki community organizers and activist groups in Delhi.

[109] The union's membership only constitutes a fraction of the estimated 350,000 *kabadiwallah's* in Delhi (Nandi 2013).

[110] Jantar Mantar is an 18th century astrological observatory in Delhi, which through the years has also become the default site for protests and similar public gatherings.

passed by the Lok Sabha in 2013 but had been pending in the Rajya Sabha[111] since then (Chitlangia 2015). While the NASVI protests spurred the passing of the Street Vendors Bill by the Rajya Sabha in February 2014, and the adoption of the Act by the Delhi Government in November 2014, the version of the bill which passed omitted the requirement that the local regulating bodies to be created, called town vending committees (TVCs), be composed of at least 40% street vendors along with other protections which were part of the original draft of the bill.[112] Moreover, implementation in Delhi has been a slow process with the municipal corporations (MCD) delaying the creation of the TVCs and thus delaying the initiation of their function of conducting surveys of street vendors in the city, issuing vending certifications, and designating vending zones. The bureaucratic lag ultimately resulted in the Delhi High Court intervening by demanding that the Chief Secretary of Delhi appear in court to answer for the delays after over 1,600 street vendors filed writ petitions to the court requesting interim protection from evictions until the act was fully implemented by the city (Mathur 2015).

Likewise, following a widespread critique of the 2013 Solid Waste Management Rules by both *kabadiwallahs* and environmentalists across the country, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) cancelled its implementation and re-drafted the policy which was finally released in 2015 (Mudgal 2016). While the new draft recognizes the contributions of *kabadiwallahs* and provides that they be incorporated into the waste management plans at the state/ local level, the extent and the process by which they are to be incorporated remains at the discretion of local governments. Some of the demands articulated by the All India

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[111] Lok Sabha or 'House of the People' is the parliamentary chamber to which members are directly elected by eligible voters. Rajya Sabha or 'House of Lords/ Council of States' is the parliamentary chamber to which members are elected by the elected members of State Legislative Assemblies in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote.

[112] NASVI posted its disappointment with these omissions on the organization's website:
< http://nasvinet.org/newsite/delhi-government-scheme-nasvi-disappointed/>

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Kabadi Mazdoor Mahasang in 2013 were indeed addressed in the new draft, such as the decentralization of waste-management to the ward level, the mandatory segregation of solid and wet waste prior to disposal by all, and the investigation of waste-to-energy plants' effects on the environment and the search for more environmentally friendly alternatives (MoEFCC 2016). While occupational organizing and right-based claims-making like those described above do not automatically result in the recognition or expansion of legal rights for the participants, they often result in the delay of implementing policies that may prove detrimental to these groups because of the increased public scrutiny, or the offer of certain concessions as a form of compromise that do not fully address the demands of the claims-makers.

In contrast, the JJ resident women living in Aradhaknagar and Kalandar Colony who participated in my study were primarily domestic workers, did piece-meal work for area factories, or were unemployed and dependent on their husbands or adult children for financial support. This meant that the isolated nature of domestic work and the precarious nature of piece-meal work made the prospect of occupation-based organizing unfeasible. Residence-based organizing was similarly impractical due to the heterogeneity of occupations, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and general interests which made collective bargaining difficult. Within specific contexts such as the imminent threat of demolition and displacement however, residents united to deploy both the language of rights as well as that of suffering and injustice at the colony level. Yet even within such circumstances, the proliferation of *pradhans* who claim to represent the interests of a colony as a whole but present contradictory demands or perspectives can often result in the silencing or exclusion of certain segments of the colony's residents. In the following section I examine the unique case of a long-standing JJC in west-central Delhi and events surrounding the DDA's announcement of demolitions and resettlement in early 2014.

The Unique Case of Kathputli Colony

No ordinary slum, this, although the huts built out of old packing-cases and pieces of corrugated tin and shreds of jute sacking which stood higgledy-piggledy in the shadow of the mosque looking no different from any other shanty-town…because this was the ghetto of the magicians…the conjurers' slum, to which the greatest fakirs and prestidigitators and illusionists in the land continually flocked, to seek their fortune in the capital city.

<div align="right">Salman Rushdie, Midnight's Children (1981:196)</div>

Located in the now bustling central Delhi neighborhood of Shadipur, less than a block away from a stop on the blue line of the Delhi Metro and a mere five minutes from Connaught Place, Kathputli Colony is arguably the most well-known and storied Indian slum following Mumbai's Dharavi. It has been the subject of numerous local and international articles, a documentary, and is the basis of the 'magicians' ghetto' in Salman Rushdie's award-winning novel *Midnight's Children.* While some residents claim the colony dates as far back as sixty years, government sources indicate that the settlement emerged in the early 1970s after a handful of performance artists[113] from Rajasthan including puppeteers and musicians settled there, in what was a semi-forested area of the western Shadipur region, due to the accessibility it provided for performances around the city. In the years that followed, more artists from other regions such as Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh moved to the same area where together "they began to cohere into a single settlement known as *Kathputli* after the type of string-puppet theatre performed by its residents" (Banda et al 2013:3). Today it is the home of thousands of performance artists ranging from musicians and puppeteers, to acrobats and dancers. Despite the widespread demolitions of the Emergency period, the residents were able to organize around their artistry and managed to avoid displacement. In the 1980s, their work with a performing arts council established by the Indian Government gained them local and international recognition, traveling to the U.K. and the

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[113] As with the Balmiki *Kabadiwallahs* discussed above, the various artists who live in Kathputli colony are members of various performer (scheduled) castes and tribes such as *Bajania Nat* and *Bazigar*.

U.S. to perform as 'cultural ambassadors' for India (Ibid:4). In the decades that followed, they've continued to perform internationally, traveling to places like Russia and France on special government issued travel documents despite their lack of 'legal' residence which prohibits them from acquiring a standard passport. Moreover, despite their seeming recognition by the government, Kathputli Colony remains "un-notified" as a slum and through the years the DDA has proposed to 'resettle' its residents on multiple occasions without success. In 2007, the DDA announced its plan to implement Delhi's first in-situ slum/JJ redevelopment plan and announced that the chosen JJC was Kathputli Colony. Following a design/planning and open bidding process, in 2009 the DDA announced that a private developer named Raheja had been awarded the project which would proceed in a PPP model (Banda et al 2013:5). Correspondingly, Raheja announced that it would use the current Kathputli Colony land to build a 15-story apartment building for the colony's residents who were eligible for resettlement at its own cost, then use the remaining land to construct a 54-story building to house luxury apartments, complete with helipad and sky-club, to be sold at commercial rates by the developer (Ibid: 1). In the meantime eligible Kathputli Colony residents would be relocated to a nearby transit camp for 3-5 years while Raheja demolished the colony and constructed the two new buildings. By the time I arrived in Delhi in September 2013, the project was stalled in the approvals stage as the construction plans had failed to meet the Environmental Clearance guidelines of the SEAC and the developer attempted to incorporate all the changes required to meet the norms and standards of the various approving agencies, including the Delhi Jal Board, MCD, Delhi Fire Services, and the Delhi Urban Arts Commission[114] (Ibid: 6). Indeed, with the lack of progress on the project and the impending local elections, most of the

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[114] Approvals from the Delhi Urban Arts Commission (DUAC) were concerned with environmental and aesthetic aspects of the proposed buildings

planners and NGO workers I spoke with postulated that the plan would likely never come to fruition.

However, apparently having acquired all the necessary institutional approvals, on February 14, 2014 the DDA announced that a 'tripartite' agreement between itself, the Kathputli Colony residents, and the developer Raheja would be used to resolve the disagreements between residents and the other two parties so as to proceed with the project as planned. This would require a certain percentage of eligible residents to sign-off on the new housing plans along with Raheja and the DDA ('3-party pact' 2014). Concerns of residents included a disagreement on the number of residents living in the colony to be 'resettled,' the condition of the transit camp that they were supposed to inhabit for up to five years while the new housing was being constructed, and the overall impracticality of the streamlined flats for their lifestyle which necessitated multi-use spaces. Less than a week later and prior to obtaining resident approvals, on Wednesday, February 19,[th] the DDA suddenly announced that it would begin vacating and relocating eligible residents from Kathputli Colony the following Monday by doing 'on-the-spot' eligibility verifications. The DDA planned to have the entire colony vacated to begin demolitions within two days (Munshi 2014).

Based on a commissioned survey conducted in 2010/2011 by a private firm, the DDA said the number of residents to be moved was 2,754 households. However, residents insisted that there were 3,200 households in the colony based on their own survey (Ibid). Apparently, the DDA commissioned survey had not included any households living above the first floor, presumably under the assumption that upper levels were simply the expansion of the ground floor residents. Because the proposed flats would be single-family unit homes, this of course meant that extended families who had been living in upper stories of jhuggis in Kathputli would be excluded. Moreover,

the DDA had never released a master list of which households *had* been included among those eligible for resettlement following completion of its survey in 2011. This meant that residents would not know whether they were going to be become homeless until the DDA agents arrived to 'verify' their lists and give out the resettlement letters, at which point approved residents would be asked to sign the 'tripartite' agreement and move to the transit camp the following day. Those who did not receive letters would be evicted with no alternative housing. What's more, even though the DDA and Raheja claimed that the transit camp for residents was 'move-in ready,' there were persistent reports among residents and NGO workers that that the camp was not yet fully constructed, still lacking basic fixtures in the small flats, enough community toilets, and a school for the children of the colony.

Around noon on February 24, 2014, the day of the scheduled evictions, I arrived with Shahana Sheik and Subhadra Banda of the Center for Policy Research (CPR) at Kathputli Colony. They had been studying the proposed 'rehabilitation' plan since the previous year and knew the area well. They had heard from friends involved with NGOs in Kathputli that the residents were planning to protest the evictions, so I had come with them to stand in solidarity with the residents. When we reached one of the smaller entrance lanes to the colony, we were met with a group of 30-40 resident women sitting on a large tarp covering the ground and blocking the entrance into the colony. Shahana and Subhadra explained to me that the residents along with some NGOs and activists who work in the community had decided that the best way to stop the DDA from coming in and demolishing their homes was to create a barrier of women and children whom presumably the DDA and their police enforcers would not hurt or run over in public view. This use of one's body as a barrier in protest which is utilized around the world, can further be understood in this context as an embodiment of claims on the city's space as well as potentially a demonstration of

the residents' suffering and the injustice of the state. Indeed, it was a similar protest by the middle-class residents of Mumbai's Campa Cola compound which had caused Supreme Court Justice Singhvi to lose sleep and moved him to grant a stay to halt impending demolitions.[115] Hoping for a similar fate, Shahana and Subhadra further told me that there had been a petition filed on behalf of the colony requesting that the evictions be halted. However, the judge had neither granted the stay order nor had he sided with the DDA. Instead he had set a court date for March 11 to hear arguments on behalf of both the Kathputli Colony residents and the DDA. In the meantime, there was nothing to legally prevent the DDA from proceeding with the evictions as scheduled. What's more, there seemed to be misinformation circulating, as we heard several residents discussing the March 11 court date as if legally, the DDA would have to wait until after the hearing to proceed. Further complicating matters, there had apparently been two lawyers hired by two separate NGOs who had appeared in court claiming to represent the colony. While it remained unclear how this issue had ultimately been resolved, it nevertheless illustrated the complexities of representation for a heterogeneous community and raised questions about outside organizations who claimed to speak for such communities.

As we made our way through the colony toward the front entrance lane where the majority of the protesters where situated, a man who looked to be in his forties and a woman who looked to be much older, stopped us to talk. They first asked us if we were with the DDA, and when we said we weren't the man started telling us how they were all willing to die to stop the demolition. He said they were willing to take a bullet and in agreement, the older woman said "*marne ki thayaar hai* [we are ready to die]" The man continued by asking, "*Hum garib log hain, yahan se kahan jayenge?* [We are poor people, where can we go from here?]" In this acutely tense moment,

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[115] See Chapter 1, section titled 'Rights to the City and Legitimate Belonging' for a longer discussion on this event.

faced with the real potential that they might lose their homes, there emerged an equally intense language of suffering and injustice. The repeated insistence that they were willing to die and the vivid imagery of 'taking a bullet' served as testimony of their dire straits for all who would listen. Particularly, outsiders like us who may be able to share their message to the city at large and help to mobilize a defense of their homes. Indeed, we were certainly not the only non-residents present that day in the colony. I saw more than a dozen NGO workers, activists, and journalists in and around the colony.

At the main entrance lane, there was a massive crowd assembled of residents and others. Similar to the smaller entrance, there was a large sheet of tarp on the ground upon which sat about a hundred women and a dozen children, along with roughly 30-40 men, both young and old dispersed around the perimeters of the seated group of women in smaller clusters. Among the seated women were some carrying protest signs written on construction paper and card board that read as follows:

> *Zameen hamari; Adhikar hamara; nahi hatenge, nahi hatenge* [The land is ours; the right is ours; we won't back down; we won't back down]
>
> *Gareeb bachchon ki yahee pukaar; mat karo hamaaree-parishram bekaar* [*this* is what the poor children are crying out for: don't let our labor/work/effort be in vain]
>
> *Dharma*[116] *alag; samachar alag; lekin hum sath* [Our destiny may be different; our story may be different, but we are united/together]

These signs illustrate perhaps the most explicit use of both the language of rights and the language of suffering and injustice as rhetorical devices in claims-making and protest. The first sign boldly lays claim to the land upon which the colony is built as well as to the rights of the residents. While

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[116] While dharma can be translated as 'destiny' or 'fate,' it also has a distinctly Hindu connotation linked to the cycle of life (dharma-karma-samsara), where an essential aspect of ones dharma is one's caste. One must adequately fulfill the obligations of that dharma (including whatever limitations come with caste) to develop one's karma and be reborn with a better dharma, the ultimate goal being to reach samsara (i.e. nirvana) and thus escape the cycle of rebirth.

refusing to recognize the technical/legal ownership of the land by the DDA, this proclamation instead elevates the 'natural' rights of the colony residents to the land which they possess by virtue of being Indian citizens, and by their long-standing occupation and development of the land which further legitimizes their claim. The second sign uses the language of suffering and *pathos* emphasized by the imagery of children 'crying-out' to tap into the emotions and the collective conscience of spectators, whether they be researchers and NGO workers or the audiences of the journalists who have come to cover the protest. The final sign, could be read as a personal affirmation for the Kathputli Colony residents as well as a declaration of solidarity and resistance against the DDA and their eviction plans. It further indicates that despite (potentially) divergent caste backgrounds and life-stories, the residents remain united in their fight to keep their homes.

As it got later in the day without any sign of the DDA, several women got up to leave to apparently eat lunch. In response, an older woman seated on a bench facing the women on the tarp implored them to stay, saying "I too am hungry! But will I eat while my house is falling on my head?" She used the vivid imagery of a house collapsing on her head to emphasize the urgency of their current predicament despite the absence of the DDA at that moment and to persuade the other women to remain at the protest to present a united front. Eventually, there was an announcement by a representative from an NGO stating that the lawyers had gone directly to the Lieutenant Governor, Najib Jung, after leaving the Delhi High Court, and he had given them his word that no demolition proceedings would be initiated prior to April 1st, giving them time to proceed with the case filed with the High Court and express their concerns to the developer and DDA. However, Mr. Jung had not put his promise in writing, so the guarantee lacked legal force.

In the weeks that followed, there were dozens of newspaper articles hypothesizing the fate of the JJC, and lauding the history and artistry of the colony's residents. While there were no

demolitions as the lieutenant governor had promised, the DDA organized a community meeting to convince residents to willingly move to the transit camps, a handful of whom did. A collective of individual activists, artists, and NGOs calling themselves 'Friends of Kathputli Colony' along with Kathputli Colony residents organized a series of events including performances and informal conversations with residents designed to attract middle-class residents of the city with the hope of mobilizing their support to "save" the colony. The 'Friends of Kathputli Colony' Facebook page, active as recently as October 2015, describes itself as "an online platform to document and share stories of the residents of Kathputli Colony. This is an attempt to not just raise awareness on their present stature but also to unearth and share their history, trace their lives in a humble attempt to go closer, to let go of that invisible apathy we at times get enveloped by."

On March 24th, I attended the final of these 'Save Kathputli' events after finding out about it on their Facebook page. There were a series of performances presented on a stage in what appeared to be an MCD constructed outdoor community space in the colony. The event space was incredibly crowded with several rows of viewers having to stand outside the compound gates to watch. After purchasing our tickets, my two friends and I (one of whom was Indian, and another who was American) were ushered by the ticket-takers through the dense crowd to a seating area on a felt carpet near the stage which the ushers said was specifically for 'guests.' I noticed that the vast majority of those seated were either foreigners, media, documentarians, or young middle-class Indian women taking pictures or videotaping using smartphones and expensive DSLRs. In contrast, colony residents who weren't performing were packed in the rear and also on the rooftops of the buildings on the sides and on the edges of the stage. After their impressive performances of music, acrobatics, and dancing, each of the performers introduced themselves and shared how long they had lived in the colony and ended with impassioned pleas or demands to save the colony. A

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group of four Australians were also invited to the stage where they performed a juggling act and afterwards spoke about their love of Kathputli Colony and the residents.[117]

Local pradhans, including three women, were then called onstage where the MC thanked them for their leadership and read aloud the Delhi High Court's decision which had been given the previous week. It outlined that the DDA would give explicit guidelines to the residents about the eligibility requirements, which included residency in the colony dating back to 2011. This would also include residents living in upper-story jhuggis as long as they could prove their residency in 2011. The court also ordered that the colony residents form a five member committee to visit the transit camp and ascertain its habitability, after which it could provide a list of changes to be made to the DDA to make it more habitable. The court also required the developer and the DDA to provide the plans for the new housing to be built, which the residents were to examine and respond with any complaints within two weeks. Finally, the court warned that no force should be used to relocate the residents. The reading of the court ruling was followed by some chanting of slogans including, "*Kathputli Colony ka ekta zindabad* [long live the unity of Kathputli Colony]," "*Mahilaon ka ekta zindabad* [long live the unity of the women]," and "*ladhenge…jeetenge* [We will fight…we will win]." The event concluded with a play composed and performed by resident children ranging in age from around ten to their late teens. The play dramatized the ongoing attempts by the DDA to resettle the Kathputli Colony residents, including very unforgiving depictions of "seedy" colony pradhans and DDA agents. By the time I completed my fieldwork at the end of April, there had been no further 'progress' in the DDA's attempts to move colony residents to the transit camp, although a handful of residents had moved willingly. In March 2015, the DDA announced that the "rehabilitation" scheme for the Kathputli Colony was a failure and

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[117] See figures 5-7 on the following pages for pictures of the event.

suggested a new proposal for rehabilitation that would require approval by at least 70% of the

colony's residents before proceeding ('DDA will take dwellers' consent' 2015).

Figure 5: *Partial view of audience at 'Save Kathputli' event (1)*

Figure 6: *Partial view of audience at 'Save Kathputli' event (2)*

Figure 7: *Resident addresses audience after acrobatic performance at 'Save Kathputli' event*

Although bureaucratic red-tape often means that many government projects are slow moving or indefinitely stalled, the case of Kathputli Colony is quite unique because its residents possess widespread recognition and support that provides them with significant leverage with which to negotiate. They are able to deploy their history of travelling abroad as "cultural ambassadors" for India as a quasi-recognition and legitimation of their colony. Furthermore, the recognition they acquired as performers had securely embedded them in the popular imaginary as they appear in award winning books like *Midnight's Children*, International documentaries like *Tomorrow We Disappear*, and popular magazines like the 2008 Time Magazine article by Heidi J. Shrager titled 'Magic Abounds in a Delhi Slum.' This has in-turn garnered the colony's residents broad international and domestic sympathy and support for their cause and has allowed them to make certain demands towards the DDA. In contrast, most JJCs in Delhi remain largely anonymous even to the rest of the city and are routinely demolished and displaced with little warning, media coverage, or pushback from non-JJC residents of the city. For instance, on December 26th, 2013, a JJC under a metro stop in Northeast Delhi was demolished by the railway which owns the land resulting in the destruction of 165 jhuggis. The JJC's over 900 residents, including 500 children, were left homeless on what was the coldest night of that winter (Pandit 2013). Thus, while the case of Kathputli Colony and the events surrounding the DDA's attempt to 'rehabilitate' it offers a unique context in which to examine residence-based organizing by JJ residents and the language and rhetorical devices they use to frame their claims-making in the context of impending demolitions, it is important to note that because most JJCs in Delhi lack the singular history and recognition of Kathputli Colony, their claims-making during an impending demolition would likely manifest differently.

As an example of claims-making around JJ demolitions that is more representative of the experiences of residents of an average JJC, I turn to a petition to Delhi CM Sheila Dixit filed by Aradhaknagar residents following their displacement due to the demolition of their jhuggis during the construction of a flyover in 2009. Parvati was one of these displaced residents who had lived in the colony for decades and was now living with some of the others who'd lost their homes in a cluster of tents and makeshift shanties made of tarp and plastic sheeting in what had been the only community park in the colony. During one of my visits to the colony, she showed me a copy of the petition letter she and the others had submitted, the body of which read as follows:[118]

> This request is in regards to a [eviction] notice dated 12/01/09 which in its first line gave us only two days-time to evacuate Aradhaknagar Colony—*which had been settled since approximately 1961*. In this time we could not even manage to collect our belongings and house materials when suddenly the homes were brought down and were destroyed along with everyone's possessions and documents. During this [demolition] one Maharishi Valmiki temple and a Shiva temple was also destroyed—an act which was *beyond boundaries [intolerable/unimaginable]*.

> Madam, during that incident approximately 62 houses were demolished. Madam, before the demolition, on the assurance of MLA Dr. Narendra Nath *we made a payment of one and a half-lakh rupees which were used to make a filler tank/pond in that colony*. But now, MLA Dr. Narendra Nath is incapable of helping us and gives us false hope and has not returned once to see the sorrow of the colony residents.

> Madam, from the 62 houses, there is now absolutely no space for more than approximately 35 houses. Therefore, please give permission to settle/occupy this 35-house accommodating space. And 27 houses are such that there is only space for one room each left. There is enough space in front of them for one more room, so please permit them/give them this space.

> Madam, police trouble/harass us a lot and threaten to remove us (make us flee) from here. Madam, *we are all staunch Congress voters*. Please, stop the police.

> Madam, *we are the sisters, daughters, and daughters-in-law of poor families*. Please, solve the problems of us poor people. We will be grateful to you for the duration of our lives. [*Emphasis Added*]

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[118] The original document is in Hindi and a copy of it can be found in the Appendices section labeled 'Appendix A.' The version presented here is a translation of the document by myself and my research assistant Kanika Gupta.

This letter illustrates the deployment of various rhetorical devices discussed above by the JJ resident petitioners as they attempt to access legal permission to rebuild their jhuggis and protection from police harassment. They point to both their lengthy tenure at that location (since 1961) and their financial investments into developing the colony (1.5 lakh rupees to build a 'filler tank') to legitimize their belonging and their claims on the colony's space. They also utilize the language of suffering by describing their devastating loss of personal property, alluding to their helplessness as members of poor families, their ongoing suffering at the hands of the police, as well as the shocking destruction of two temples to call on the CM's 'humanity' and elicit a sympathetic response. It is also notable that while the displaced residents included both men and women, the letter articulated only the women by characterizing the petitioners as 'sisters,' 'daughters,' and 'daughters-in-law.' This draws on the dominant narrative of women's 'vulnerability' discussed in chapter 3 and an expectation that their protection is the obligation of the state. It serves a similar function as the positioning of women and children at the entrances of Kathputli colony as a barrier from the demolition trucks. Specifically, the sanctioned harming of women serves as a moral indictment of the state. Finally, they remind the CM of the usefulness of their support during elections by stating that they are 'staunch Congress voters' (i.e. Sheila Dixit's party), and offer a 'rational' plan to accommodate the displaced residents in the limited space that remains following the new road construction. Yet, unlike with Kathputli Colony, the displaced Aradhaknagar residents had yet to receive any acknowledgment or formal response from the state.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the ways in which *legitimate belonging* and *urban citizenship* are discursively constructed and contested among Delhi residents occupying various social positions as they draw upon and at times refute deeply entrenched narratives about themselves and

others. By exploring the persistent characterization of JJ residents as migrants, criminals, polluters, and state-dependent 'parasites' within dominant discourses, I illustrated how their claims on the city's spaces and resources was continually challenged and de-legitimized. The persistence of some of these stereotypes even among self-described allies of JJ residents facilitated the reification of these narratives within the city's shared imaginary and in-turn their deployment in the ongoing marginalization and exclusion of JJ residents from fully accessing their rights and entitlements as *Delhiites*. Yet they continue to contest their marginalization by alternatively drawing on a rights-based approach or utilizing pathos as a rhetorical device in their attempts to secure space and resources in the city. The petition of Parvati and others from Aradhaknagar succinctly illustrates JJ residents' active engagement with and resistance to popular narratives that portray them as new-comers to the city and as 'parasites' on city resources as they assert their length of residency and active investment in their colony's improvement, and attempt to directly negotiate with the state. In the following chapter, I expand beyond these negotiations, improvisations, and rhetorical activities deployed by JJ residents—which I've argued in this chapter can be understood as political engagement which works to stretch the limits and possibilities of 'formal' politics—to examine the ways in which their relationship with the state and formal politics is shaped by shared perceptions and experiences of bureaucratic opacity and corruption.

Chapter 5: Politics and the Rise of the *Aam Aadmi*

In this chapter, I explore how perceptions and experiences of state opacity, bureaucracy, and corruption have shaped the ways in which JJ residents have tended to interact with governmental institutions and engage in political activity. To this end, I begin with an exploration of recurring themes that emerged throughout my interactions with women of Aradhaknagar, Kalandar, and Geeta Colony surrounding their attempts to navigate bureaucracy and have their basic needs met. I then examine how the recent emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party or the "common man's party"—particularly its appropriation of 'national' symbols, its attempts to create a socially undifferentiated citizenry, depoliticize governance, and transform the individual's relationship to the state—have altered the political landscape of Delhi and JJ residents' access to it. I specifically explore the development of the persona of AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal as a 'hero' advocating for the needs of the poor by contrasting perceptions of him within the middle-class and mainstream media with that of my JJ resident research participants. Finally, I problematize the gendered language inherent to the party's name as well as the party's treatment of women within the broader context of women's political participation in Delhi and the intersectional identities of my JJ resident interlocutors.

Corruption, Bureaucratic Opacity, & 'Being Heard'

"The intermittent nature of governmental control, the illegibility of the law, and the negotiations around the thin lines between the legal and the illegal are part of the everyday life of these [poor] *neighborhoods."*

Veena Das (2004:244)

The pervasiveness of "corruption[119]" and the opacity and inaccessibility of relevant government initiatives complicate poor Delhiites' attempts at accessing full citizenship protections

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[119] This term offers the most easily recognizable short-hand for a range of behaviors and practices broadly characterized by illegality, questionable ethics, and the misuse of power for personal gain. However, considering the assertion by my JJ resident participants (discussed in this chapter) that these practices are indeed the *rule* rather than

and entitlements. Particularly, the extensive network of 'extra-legal' bribes and brokers embedded into the local bureaucratic system as well as the constantly changing, inconsistently implemented, and at times contradictory government policies form a complex socio-political matrix which JJ residents must continually navigate in their negotiations for rights to the city and basic resources. It is to this characteristic of the Indian state's "illegibility" and the ongoing process of negotiation that Das (2004) alludes in the introductory quote above. Throughout my interactions with JJ residents, certain themes repeatedly emerged within the context of getting their basic needs met and navigating bureaucracy: an understanding that 'corruption,' graft, and profiteering were the norm across institutions of power—both governmental and non-governmental; the incomprehensibility and inconsistency of government policies; and a shared sense that JJ residents were continually "unheard."

The Power to Exploit

For most of the JJ residents I spoke with, their interactions with state bureaucracy in its various iterations was predicated on their ability to gather a sufficient bribe or *hafta*.[120] As Ganga of Aradhaknagar pointed out succinctly, "You give money and work will be done. If you don't give money work will not be done.[121]" What's more, bribes were required not only by those occupying formal positions within the state, but also by the various brokers and informal 'gate-keepers' discussed in chapter 3 who often serve as necessary intermediaries between JJ residents

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the *exception*, I present it here within quotation marks to problematize its connotation/implication of *deviation* from the norm or ideal.

[120] While the literal translation of the word 'hafta' is 'week,' it is popularly used as a euphemism for 'protection money' given to gangsters, police officers, or others. While it is sometimes used to describe one-time bribe payments, it is more commonly used for ongoing periodic payments, perhaps based on one obscure translation of the term meaning "installment."

[121] A larger excerpt of Ganga's statement is provided and discussed in the "JJCs as Hubs of Crime and Pollution" section of chapter 4.

and state institutions.[122] For instance, as Maya of Aradhaknagar told me, the local pradhan insists on a two or three thousand rupee personal 'fee' in addition to any formal filing fees in order to facilitate residents' application for ration cards. This amount is staggering when considering that several women from the colony indicated that their husband's average monthly salary amounted to three to four thousand rupees. While the government does not *require* that ration card applications be filed by pradhans, the complexity of the bureaucratic process involved in such applications, the amount of time such processes require in terms of repeated visits to government offices etcetera, as well as existing alliances between said intermediaries and low-level bureaucrats often necessitate the intervention of such intermediaries in order to practically access basic processes like applying for a ration card. Similar to the pradhan in Aradhaknagar, Amarvati and others in Kalandar Colony pointed to the insistence of their local MLA that applications for the recently initiated 'Aadhaar' or Universal I.D. (UID) card as well as voter registration cards be processed through him. Particularly, Amarvati pointed to the MLAs use of his official seal/stamp on these applications as a "show of power," even though it is not required to file the application. Here we see an example of the "illegibility" of the state (Das 2004) where an official uses the endorsement that the MLA seal provides to legitimize an otherwise extra-legal practice.

Pointing to the pervasiveness of corruption, Seema of Aradhaknagar told me that the few people in the bureaucratic network who are willing to work without requiring bribes are rendered incapable of doing so, saying "the 2-4 people who work, they are not allowed to work. They take papers from here, but once in the office they're told 'don't sign their papers, it is my [political] party.' They want 500-1000 rupees. If you give in hand they will take. A form fee is one thing, but 1000 rupees? From where will the poor give? Must he steal? 3000 is salary, from where will we

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[122] See "Bechara: Intersections of Gender and Poverty within a Bureaucratic Matrix" section of chapter 3.

give?" Similarly other JJ residents indicated that corruption within the system, whether in the form of bribery and extortion or in the form of circumventing or exploiting legal policies, was not limited to bureaucrats.

For instance, Padma of Kalandar Colony insisted that doctors working in the much criticized nearby government hospital worked in connivance with a nearby private pharmacy. The doctors would prescribe medications which they told patients weren't available at the hospital dispensary and directed them to the pharmacy which in-turn gave the doctors a commission. Another Kalandar Colony resident, Mahesh argued that private schools find ways around legal stipulations that require them to reserve slots for poor and 'minority' students, stating "Half of the schools, what they do to show 30% [quota] is…they have guards and peons, so they give admission to their kids and our kids are left out. They say they have lottery system, in 100 they pick 1 and even those they remove in a year or two using some excuse." He added that meanwhile, government schools predominantly attended by poor and JJ resident children had a mandate from the (then) CM Sheila Dixit to pass the students along until the 10th grade in an attempt to maintain high official literacy rates, regardless of whether they were learning, declaring "You go and check in these schools, the child doesn't know how to write their name, they will not be able to write their colony address, and they are in 8th or 9th class." These claims by Padma and Mahesh, irrespective of their factual accuracy, clearly illustrate the shared understanding that corruption is the rule rather than the exception within institutions of power.

Likewise, Aradhaknagar resident Rajwati, declared during a group discussion that inevitably, when building one's jhuggi, "you lay a brick and the police will be standing here with a stick saying 'I want 500 rupees.' 500 rupees is [the cost of] a cement bag...stone and all!" This assertion, supported by the other residents present, not only indicates police officers' knowledge

of the construction of "illegal" JJs from the outset, but also their active involvement in the process. By negotiating a (periodically repeated) payment for which they will allow a JJ to be "illegally" constructed and remain standing, police officers as enforcers of law, blur the distinction between the legal and the illegal. They provide a tacit, albeit conditional and temporary, authorization to a technically illegal construction. It is also important to note here, that while there is a significant difference in the relational power between the home-builders and the police/government agents in the context of JJCs, middle and upper-class builders of "unauthorized housing" similarly maintain a tacit "extra-legal" authorization for their constructions through bribes and *haftas* to police officers and relevant government agencies (i.e. DDA or MCD). In such contexts however, the negotiations are not predicated on the threat of violence by the police as described by Rajwati.

Moreover, such extra-legal authorizations as well as the accumulation of various other bureaucratic recognitions attained through *illegal* or *extra-legal* negotiations described above—official voter registration or ration cards acquired through un-official payments to pradhans and MLAs—helps to establish a documentation trail upon which claims for *legal* recognitions can be made through time. For instance, the most commonly used criteria by government agencies like the DDA to determine eligibility for resettlement housing after the demolition of a JJC is documented proof of residence in a given JJC at the time of a given "cut-off" date in the past. This of course is necessarily dependent on the construction and prolonged existence of a JJC facilitated by bribes to police and local bureaucrats, and extra-legal negotiations and recognitions that allow for government issued entitlement cards and utility connections.

While JJ resident participants' most frequent pronouncements of corruption and profiteering were directed at agents and agencies of the state, there were also some indications that JJ residents also had similar critiques of NGOs. During one group discussion with Aradhaknagar

resident women, the always outspoken Seema pointed to a half-constructed gutter—apparently a

CURE project—and posited that the NGO had probably allocated to it from the government or

donors, and pocketed much of it instead of properly building the gutter. Lalita, who worked as part

of CURE's 'field-staff' and lived in the nearby Kalandar Colony JJC, had accompanied me to

Aradhaknagar that day to help me facilitate a focus group discussion. She had initially introduced

me to most of the Aradhaknagar resident women, and had a long-standing and generally amicable

relationship with them. While discussing if there had been any infrastructural improvements

initiated in the colony by the government or non-governmental agencies working within the

community, Seema addressed both Lalita and myself thusly:

> They made a gutter here, from your group [*gesturing to Lalita*]. They said gutter
> will be made, it will be clean…they made it such as if it is not there. They made it
> very poorly! [*Pointing to the gutter and speaking to women in the group seated in
> that direction*] Get away let her [Meskerem] see. These are the bricks they have
> put, the 2 bricks should have been placed equally [levelly]! Allocation must have
> been of 10-15 lakh…5 lakh, where did the rest of the money go? [*to Lalita*]Your
> group must have eaten it up! You take accounts everywhere. Government must
> have given the money.

Seema's proclamation led to all the women speaking at once, including Lalita who adamantly

denied the accusation and insisted that CURE had done as much as they could until they had run

out of funding. Once the cacophony quieted down, Krishna-ji asserted that at least the organization

had done *something*, unlike anyone else. To this Seema responded by saying, "It was no favor to

us…they didn't pay money out of their pocket, the government gave the money." While Seema

was the only resident I spoke with who made a direct accusation against a specific NGO misusing

government funds allocated for a JJC, there were a few other occasions wherein residents made

general comments about "people" syphoning off money that was meant to improve their

conditions.

Similarly, during an interview with former DDA Commissioner of Planning A.K. Jain, he told me that he had conducted an informal survey of 500 residents in several Delhi JJCs to determine what they expected from the DDA, local councilors and politicians, as well as what they expected from NGOs as a member of a 2004 government initiative towards creating a "slum-free" city known as the *Madhukar Gupta Committee*. He claimed, that while about fifteen percent of those interviewed found NGOs to be useful for getting specific resources like blankets or medicine, they didn't think that they were particularly helpful in the long run. He added, "Some people even said that 'NGOs survive because of our misery. If we are not poor, if we are not in trouble, they won't survive,'" further stating that the respondents had similar perceptions of local councilors and MLAs whom they suspected worked in tandem with local 'slumlords' who regularly extorted money from the residents.

My conversations with JJ residents did not (explicitly) reveal a common belief that the existence of NGOs necessitates the continued suffering of poor and JJ residents. If this was indeed a shared belief among my research participants, it is unlikely they would have shared it with me considering our introduction was facilitated by an NGO. Nevertheless, the general perceptions of corruption and profiteering within institutions and positions of power by A.K. Jain's respondents are consistent with those of my research participants. Their formal interactions with individuals occupying positions of power relative to themselves—whether government bureaucrats, admissions officers in private schools, doctors in government hospitals, or even NGO workers— were contoured by an expectation of exploitation or profiteering. As such, their negotiations within such interactions were preemptively aimed at minimizing this exploitation as they attempted to have particular needs met.

As with corruption, the frustrations of JJ residents with the opacity, plurality, and inconsistency of government policies that directly impacted their lives repeatedly emerged throughout our interactions. While some residents referenced their repeated and unsuccessful attempts to access certain officials or policy initiatives, others pointed to their general confusion and uncertainty about particular bureaucratic processes or policy changes. As indicated in the previous chapter, a long-time resident of Aradhaknagar named Parvati told me of her ongoing struggle to get some kind of definitive response about compensation or resettlement from the Delhi government following the demolition of her jhuggi in 2009 for a road expansion project. After showing me a copy of the petition[123] she and the other displaced residents had submitted to the Chief Minister's office, Parvati explained to me:

> Our file is also there—where Sheila Dixit used to sit. Whoever's jhuggis were broken, their names, everything has gone but to date—it will soon be 5 years—there has been no response. We have been making enquiries, spent our money in travelling and went [to the office]…to date, they didn't say that 'you will get money or we will do something about you.'

Despite the government's continued non-responsiveness, she always kept a copy of the petition and several accompanying documents—which included a copy of the eviction/demolition notice[124] and a list of all the displaced residents—stapled together and close at hand. She regularly showed them to NGO workers and researchers like me who visited the colony, and was prepared to present them to government officials if they ever came to assign alternative housing. The petition and resident list drafted and signed by the displaced residents, possessed no legal 'power.' However, through their mimicry of bureaucratic documents and their circulation (Das 2004), as well as their

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[123] For a translation of the letter as well as an analysis of its contents, see Chapter 4.

[124] See 'Appendix B' for a copy of the eviction/demolition notice posted in the colony 2 days before the demolitions.

juxtaposition with the official demolition notice, they provided a 'rational' and 'legible' bases for the residents' claim in an otherwise 'illegible' and inconsistent process of demolition and resettlement.

While accompanying CURE regional manager Shashi on one of her biweekly visits to Geeta colony, the general confusion and lack of information about several pertinent government policies for poor and JJ residents became apparent. Mentioning her recent visit to a JJ resettlement colony called Savda Ghevra in the northeastern peripheries of the city, she stated how possession of specific documents corresponding to various historical government schemes had determined the size of the plots that had been given to resettled households. For instance, those possessing 'V.P. Singh tokens' issued around 1990 as proof of residence for JJ dwellers received plots that were 18yd,^{2} while those who didn't have these tokens but could produce other official documentation such as ration cards as proof of residence received 12yd^2 plots. Shashi went on to ask the six women sitting with us if they had filled out paperwork for the recently initiated Rajiv Awas Yojna (RAY)[125] scheme aimed at providing housing for poor urban residents, to which they all replied that they hadn't known much about it and a couple stated that they had filled out some forms but nothing had happened. Disbelieving their claim of not knowing, perhaps due to the initiative's broad advertisement on television and billboards across the city, Shashi insisted "Don't you watch TV? But you are literate…" to which colony resident Urvashi retorted, "What literate? We will get to know once we hear of it, even from your side many people must have filled it, nobody got madam, forms were filled, where did anyone get?"

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[125] RAY, launched in 2009, was the latest and most popular in a long history of anti-slum and affordable housing initiatives during my time in Delhi in 2013-14 along with the recently established DUSIB and its overarching mission of slum and JJ redevelopment.

Likewise, during a visit with several Kalandar Colony resident women during which Shashi was also present, a conversation about another government scheme called *Ladli Yojna* further illustrated the confusion surrounding such government initiatives and their inaccessibility to JJ resident women. Explaining that the *Ladli* scheme was meant to empower girls from low-income families by linking financial assistance to their education,[126] Shashi told me that it was launched in 2008 and added that it was "there even now." At Shashi's assertion, colony resident and mother of five Amarvati waved her hands dismissively after which the following exchange occurred:

> **Amarvati** – They did not apply it, they did not give us anything. All my children have studied in government schools, nothing has happened. A form came and we went to open an account, they said 'take madam[127], get her signature, madam will go.' This is nothing, it is all rubbish. They fooled the girl by giving her a toffee!

> **Shashi** – No it is not like that aunty, the younger girl [*gesturing toward Raj*] has just received a check.

> **Raj** – Yes, my own daughter has got it, a letter came we did not open it. People do not have information about it, people should have information. It is not there…some have. They make a fool out of us. 5000 rupees check came, but the account was not opened so the check is lying like that only…they said it is rubbish. Where should we collect information from? They have been making us run around for so long!

Whether through the lack of accurate information or due to intentional 'trickery,' both Amarvati and Raj illustrate their inability to access a program that could uniquely benefit them and their daughters. Similarly, Kathputli Colony residents discussed in the previous chapter pointed to the complete lack of transparency by the DDA and Raheja Builders regarding population surveys and

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[126] The initiative offers Delhi-born girls from families which make an annual income of less than 1 lakh 5,000 rupees upon admission to grade school, with additional lump sums of 5,000 rupees when the girl continues her education by enrolling in 6th and 9th grade, and then again if she passes the 10th grade, and finally in 12th grade. The families are required to open a savings account in the girl's name where the checks are to be deposited directly after the initial payment, and to which only she will have access upon turning 18 years old.

[127] It was unclear who the "madam" was that she was referring to here.

eligibility criteria which left residents anxiously speculating on their potential homelessness in the wake of an impending demolition.

Adding to the incomprehensibility of government policies due to the lack of transparency were the multiplicity of overlapping policies and their inconsistencies. For instance, during my fieldwork in Delhi in 2013-2014, there were at least five simultaneously active national-level policies on low-income housing and poverty-alleviation in urban areas of which I was aware in addition to the numerous state-level programs such as *Ladli Yojana* discussed above and the various initiatives for slum and JJ 'upgradation' and resettlement by the newly established DUSIB. The national policies included the *National Urban Livelihoods Mission* (NULM), launched in 1997 and updated in 2009-10, which aimed at reducing urban poverty through increasing employment;[128] the *Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission* (JNNURM) launched in 2005 with its particular sub-schemes *Basic Services for Urban Poor* (BSUP) and *Integrated Housing & Slum Development Program* (IHSD) which focused specifically on slums and JJCs; Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) launched in 2011 and framed as an extension of JNNURM and overlapped with the existing BSUP and IHSD schemes; and *Rajiv Rinn Yojana* (RRY) launched in 2013[129] aimed at increasing homeownership among poor urban residents by extending them lines of credit towards purchasing homes (Ministry of Housing 2014). While the JJ residents who participated in my study should have been eligible for most of these programs; the dearth of accurate information available to them, the complexity of navigating local bureaucracy to process applications for such programs, and the frequency with which said programs were altered or

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[128] This initiative was itself was created by merging and restructuring three previous programs: Urban Basic Services for the poor (UBSP), Nehru Rozgar Yojna (NRY), and Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Program (PMIUPEP).

[129] This scheme was a re-designed version of a previous 2008 scheme named Interest Subsidy Scheme for Housing the Urban Poor (ISSHUP) which the Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation reported as having had a "less than optimal performance" after its initial implementation (2014:33).

replaced made them practically inaccessible to my participants. Moreover, the plurality of jurisdictional authority over policy implementation and ownership of land occupied by JJCs allowed for the eschewal of accountability by government agencies and thus resulted in the stagnation or general neglect of certain policies. As Manoj Rai of PRIA told me, pointing to what he saw as the growing alienation of poor urban residents from local governance systems, "So, in the city there are multiple authorities…multiplicity of authority but absence of responsible authority. Where I should go, as a citizen? I don't know. To whom I should approach?"

The tangible effects of such an "absence of responsible authority" within JJCs became particularly evident during two separate conversations with Lalita and Sukant of CURE. While leaving Kalandar Colony after a CURE sponsored workshop for resident women on maternal health, I noticed an overwhelmingly putrid chemical smell emanating from a stagnant pool of water located in a small trash-filled field just beyond a low wall which, along with the field, separated the rear border of the colony from several private factories where many residents of the colony work. There were several young children playing in the area, as well as a few scattered groups of young men sitting and chatting on the wall. Lalita, who was also a resident of the colony, told me that the malodorous water is run-off from the factories. No government land-owning agency was willing to claim ownership of the field and thus procure its clean-up, either through negotiating with the factory owners or through obtaining an injunction requiring the factories to properly dispose of their chemical run-off. Conversely, JJ residents didn't have any legal standing to petition for such an injunction as neighboring residents affected by the run-off since their JJC was *illegally* occupying land owned by the DDA. As a result, CURE had been unsuccessful in its attempts to eliminate this ongoing pollution.

Similarly, Sukant told me of an ongoing issue with a gap of jurisdictional authority over community toilets in Delhi JJCs. Residents of Geeta colony and CURE had worked out a system wherein they would assume responsibility for the two community toilets in the colony. Residents had agreed to pay for monthly household passes which would allow unlimited usage instead of the 1-2rupees the men were required to pay per visit. The money from the passes would go toward hiring care-takers for the toilets who were colony residents as well as toward general up-keep of the facilities (which would presumably be subsidized by CURE). The plan had emerged from the residents' frustrations with the current system wherein the men had to pay per visit and their access to the toilets was dependent on the arrival and departure of an outside care-taker hired by the MCD. The residents had worked out this plan with the NGO to maximize their access to the toilets and eliminate some major factors behind open defecation in their colony.

This plan was dependent on the CURE and the residents being able to officially assume responsibility for the administration of these toilets from the government. However, as Sukant pointed out, while the construction and maintenance of basic sanitation infrastructure and services had historically fallen under the purview of the MCD, the recent establishment of DUSIB as the singular agency mandated with the administration of the city's slums and JJCs had prompted the MCD to hand-over responsibility for the administration of nearly 450 community toilets to DUSIB. However, citing its lack of budgetary allocations and overall capacity for undertaking the task of cleaning and maintaining all of these community toilets, DUSIB had refused to accept the MCD letter officially transferring administration of these toilets to the board and thus hadn't assumed responsibility for them. This had in-turn prevented CURE and the residents of Geeta Colony to proceed with their plan for self-administered community toilets. Sukant further explained:

We can't take the two toilets in Geeta Colony because it is stuck in the middle. We have a good partnership with MCD, we have a very good reputation with DUSIB, but the difference is that they [MCD] have given the toilets and they [DUSIB] are not taking it. And they [DUSIB] told us, personally they told us …. We can't take 2 toilets, if we want to take, we have to take all [450] of them.

In this particular case, the overlap of jurisdictional authority and the eschewal of responsibility by both agencies had not only resulted in an administration gap of an already inadequate service, but had also impeded the community's attempts to meet their own needs more fully.

A Sense of Being Unheard

Perhaps the most frequent assertion that I heard throughout my interactions with JJ residents was that their needs and claims were consistently "unheard." Even when it wasn't explicitly stated, this sense of being unheard was an underlying theme of most discussions. It can be seen in the preceding sections of this chapter within the routinely unfulfilled promises of politicians to JJ residents; the continued lack of response by the Delhi Government to Parvati and other displaced residents of Aradhaknagar; and even Shashi's disbelief when the women of Geeta and Kalandar colony tell her of their inability to access certain government programs. Similarly, an exchange between colony residents and two CURE representatives during a community meeting about cleaning up a park demonstrated one of the ways in which JJ resident needs go unheard.

The meeting—which I was told had been requested by residents who had approached CURE about helping them clean-up a small park in the colony which had been rendered unusable as a communal space for recreation and leisure by its habitual usage as a trash dump and site of open defecation—was apparently meant to ensure community consensus before embarking on the clean-up project. However, early in the meeting, several resident men asserted that what was more needed was another community toilet in place of the park. One of the NGO meeting facilitators, a

man in his sixties who I hadn't officially met, responded to this assertion by laughing and asking, "Make a toilet there? And bring the dirt closer to your home?" while another CURE staff member named Ramesh added, "Even if we make a toilet, they will say 2 people are inside and again they will sit [defecate] there [outside]." When the resident men persisted, stating that they had originally asked the government contractor to build a toilet when he had first come to build the park, Ramesh responded by saying that it must not have been within his contract to build a toilet and proceeded with the meeting as planned. It may have been true that there were residents who wanted to utilize the park for recreation who approached CURE; that perhaps building a new toilet was beyond what the NGO was currently able to do; or that it was outside of the original builder's contract to construct a toilet instead of the authorized park. Nonetheless, it is quite telling how the residents' expressed desire/need for a toilet was repeatedly dismissed in favor of someone else's assessment of their needs. While the first comment about 'bringing the dirt closer to home' uses the facilitator's own perception of proper hygiene and cleanliness to invalidate the residents' request for a toilet, the second comment by Ramesh draws upon his opinion that open defecation is a matter of habit not of necessity to do the same. As the government agency that originally built the park had seemingly chosen *not* to consult colony residents about their needs before building it, the NGO co-facilitators similarly chose not to *hear* the needs of at least a segment of the residents participating in the meeting.

During my first visit to Kalandar Colony described in the previous chapter, self-identified pradhan Mahesh cited a similar practice of not incorporating residents and their expressed needs into the planning of slum and JJ "resettlement" schemes to explain their frequent lack of success. He told me:

> If the government representative comes to the public he will get to know. He sits in his parliament and Vidhan Sabha and says that he will build 10 story building and

give. If he is giving 10 story—he is not giving but let us suppose that if he gives—someone's snake is lost and it goes to someone else's house what will happen? Someone's monkey goes loose, what will happen? So separate space is needed.

Adding that there was no use in giving residents 'fancy' new flats if it meant they were unable to sustain their means of livelihood due to the impracticality of their new housing. While my interactions with urban planners indicated that there might be an emerging shift towards participatory planning which incorporated JJ residents' input, the more common refusal to hear JJ residents' needs seems to be linked to the dominant perception discussed in chapter 4 that providing JJ residents with resettlement housing is a matter of benevolence. As such, they are expected to gratefully accept whatever is provided for them.

Likewise, while discussing the problem of rising electricity bills following the recent privatization of that utility service with a group of Geeta Colony resident women, Kanta expressed her struggles to be heard by both elected representatives and the electricity provider in her attempts to have her complaints addressed. Like several other residents, she believed that the high prices were due to a faulty meter which inflated her family's electricity usage. She asserted:

> The people who have won, the *vidhayaks* [councilors], you go to them but *there is no one to listen*. If you go to Krishna Nagar,[130] *no one will listen to you*. If you go to Krishna Nagar, they will say, 'deposit 50 rupees, fill the form, then someone will go to check at your home'…I myself went 20 times, no one came! Where did anyone come from Krishna Nagar? [*Emphasis added*]

Kanta's description of no one listening, despite her repeated attempts to vocalize her complaints, was consistent with the description of many other JJ residents with whom I interacted. It was often used to connote a sense of helplessness and frustration. Similar to the performance of politicians during election campaigns, there was a sense that no one—bureaucrats, researchers, NGO workers,

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[130] Krishna Nagar is the location of BSES-BYPL's (the electricity provider's) regional office overseeing service to Geeta Colony. While Kanta begins her statement by referencing the newly elected councilors, she shifts to talk about the electricity company.

and journalists alike—was really listening to what JJ residents were saying. Rather everyone was simply going through the motions of 'listening,' such as holding community meetings or asking residents to fill-out formal complaints, but ultimately not *hearing* what JJ residents wanted or needed and thus failing to make any qualitative changes to address them. Vijay, resident and master of ceremonies for the final "Save Kathputli Colony" event discussed in chapter 4, criticized what he framed as a willful distortion of the colony residents' statements about their mistreatment by the government throughout the (ultimately unsuccessful) redevelopment attempt thusly:

> Today, so many news channel people come here, they have picked our voice, it is visible on TV, also newspapers. But we have one complaint, that when our interview is taken, then whatever we tell, the complete statement is not shown, for this we are complaining to the media people. *Whatever we say, they should show the whole thing. Why are the main things cut out?* So we are a little upset with the media people.

Whether it manifested in those in positions of authority entirely ignoring the expressed needs of JJ residents, or members of the media distorting or only partially reporting them, being "unheard" was common experience among the JJ residents with whom I spoke. This struggle to be heard, along with the frustrations of navigating opaque bureaucracy and government policy, and ongoing attempts to minimize or circumvent the payment of bribes and *haftas* together characterized a significant portion of JJ residents' attempts to fulfill their basic needs. Thus, as we move to the following section, it is important to recognize that while the public spectacle of elections garners them much attention, routine encounters with bureaucratic institutions and negotiations with low-level officials such as those discussed above constitute the majority of JJ residents' engagements with government and the state more broadly.

Beyond Vote Banks: Delhi's Poor Residents and Electoral Politics

Despite the explicit distrust and ambivalence of many slum and JJ residents towards politicians and their associated institutions of power discussed above, India has historically boasted

a consistently high election turn-out among its poorer citizens (Khilnani 1999). This is generally attributed to the prevalence of client-patron relationships between politicians and their otherwise marginalized constituents and the associated vote-bank politics. As indicated in previous sections and chapters, electoral campaigns on the ground often manifest in *quid-pro-quo* agreements with JJ residents wherein politicians promise protection from demolition, improvement of basic infrastructure, or use proxies to offer residents alcohol and cash in return for votes. These relationships are neither static nor simply transactional. Rather, JJ residents' experiences with particular parties or candidates, as well as their routine bureaucratic encounters with agents of the state help to shape their overall perceptions of governmental institutions and processes. This in-turn informs the ways in which they engage in political activity and negotiate for basic resources and services.

Consistent with the shared understanding that exploitation and profiteering is the norm within institutions of powers among many of my JJ resident research participants, there was also a persistent theme of distrust of and disillusionment by politicians and their false promises. Yet all of these same participants admitted that they regularly vote, reflecting the above mentioned high voting rates among poor urban residents. Residents of Aradhaknagar, Kalandar Colony, and Geeta Colony all referred to the familiar image of political candidates coming to their neighborhoods asking for votes "with folded hands[131]" only to disappear once they were elected into office. During a visit to Aradhaknagar in March 2014, I spoke to several women residents about their participation in the recently completed local Legislative Assembly elections as well as their perspectives on the upcoming national elections to be held the following month. Krishna-ji told me, "When elections

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[131] This saying refers to the pressing of one's palms together while offering the greeting of 'namaste' to someone. Its use is notable in the context of politicians toward JJ residents because the greeting denotes respect to those being greeted, which is *not* consistent with how officials generally treat JJ residents outside of the campaign context.

come, the leaders themselves come to our homes with folded hands, they fold hands, say that we will make a school, we will get toilets made, get cleaning done, we will get the 'jhuggis' 'pukka', after winning they do nothing." Similarly, during a group conversation with women in Geeta colony following a community meeting organized by the NGO CURE, Urvashi told me that while most of the time there is no one to hear their complaints about not being able to access adequate sanitation services, when elections are around the corner "they will come, folded hands, they will come to your door and shake hands with you, hug you, after that when their work is done then..." and shrugged silently. When I asked her and the other women if they still vote considering this track record of local politicians, Kanta responded saying, "Yes we do. What [else] to do? Whichever government is made they also come and fold hands, so we help them." As these quotes illustrate, the candidate with folded hands had become a signifier for the illusory spectacle of electoral politics. Even while many JJ residents played-along with the familiar performances of candidates who visited their colonies during election campaigns and even voted for them, they had little expectation that the politicians would keep their promises once they were elected into office.

Later during the above referenced group discussion in Aradhaknagar, when the conversation turned to the lack of schools in the area, Seema pointed out, "Madam all the political leaders said they will open a school but till date they have not done so." Nodding, Maya said, "It has been 16 years since my marriage, they come asking for votes only!" while Rajwati and Ganga added, "They say all this before elections, 'we will get a school and a park made here.' But after that nothing happens." In this sense, the participation of JJ residents in electoral politics through voting can generally be framed as a utilitarian rather than an idealistic endeavor. Particularly, it is a way for them to deploy the limited power that voting affords them to maximize the potential for a more sympathetic and accessible local bureaucracy, or to minimize the potential of their JJCs

being demolished. Expressing a sentiment similar to that of Rajwati discussed in the previous chapter that politicians win elections through the votes of poor residents, Mahesh of Kalandar Colony pointed to politicians' need for JJ residents' votes asserting, "Which Vidhan Sabha member will want to remove us and spoil his vote bank? Maybe they will remove us, but we will then shift to someone else's territory. So we are hoping that we will not be asked to leave."

Thus, while JJ residents generally have limited social capital to deploy to ensure favorable policies, voting—particularly when consolidated at the colony level into a 'vote-bank'—provides potential leverage through which to temporarily secure tenancy or access to certain resources. Of course, any such assurances of secure tenancy and access to resources are tentative and rarely constitute permanent legal recognitions (Chatterjee (2004); Hossain (2013)). This is because the success of such vote-bank politics requires that the need which causes a vote-bank's dependence upon a particular political party or elected official remain on-going. Consequently, the inaction of elected officials discussed above which sustains poor JJ residents' dependency on elected officials also works to maintain their ongoing socio-economic marginalization in the city. Moreover, it's important to note that not all such client-patron relationships are mutually beneficial to even this minimal extent, nor are they always 'freely' entered into by poor residents. The distribution of cash incentives by political campaigners may provide immediate, if limited, financial relief for JJ residents. However, as Zabiliute (2014) notes, the distribution of alcohol as a voting incentive which overwhelmingly targets JJ resident men can exacerbate violence against JJ resident women (93-94). There are also instances in which vote-banks are mobilized *not* through material incentives and political promises, but through the coercion of local strong-men, 'slum-lords,' or other powerful proxies of the candidates. Even so, the lead-up to the 2013 Delhi Legislative Assembly Elections and the corresponding rise of the newly established Aam Aadmi Party offered

the potential for shifting the dynamics between the city's poor residents and electoral politics away from the established patterns discussed above.

The Emergence of the 'Common Man's' Party

On November 26, 2012, during a public rally marking the fifty-third anniversary of the adoption of the Indian Constitution, the Aam Aadmi Party was formally launched. This formal launch was preceded by the release of the nascent party's 'vision document' on October 2, the birthday of Mohandas K. Gandhi and a national holiday (Wyatt 2015:169). Focusing primarily on the widely acknowledged corruption within the Indian government and political system, the party initially emerged as an avatar of the 2011-2012 social movement against corruption which advocated the establishment of an independent, civil society led *jan lokpal* or 'people's ombudsman' empowered to investigate and prosecute incidents of corruption through the highest levels of government. After several failed attempts to get the proposed Jan Lokpal Bill passed, the core leadership of the India Against Corruption (IAC) movement splintered into two major camps in September 2012. While one camp led by the erstwhile face of the movement, Anna Hazare, continued to push for legislative change through protest, civil disobedience, and other forms of social mobilization; another camp led by Arvind Kejriwal chose to further pursue the goals of anti-corruption by forming a new political party—the Aam Aadmi Party.

Building on the IACs harsh critique of what it characterized as the endemic corruption of the contemporary political class, AAP presented itself as the only 'untainted' option for honest, hard-working citizens, ready for a responsive and transparent government—i.e. the *aam aadmi* and *aurat*. Far from being a limitation, the party's lack of experience in electoral politics and governance was instead framed as a strength, indicating that it had not been 'corrupted' like the older established parties. AAP's characterization of the political class echoed and validated many

JJ residents' understanding of 'corruption' as constitutive of contemporary networks of power while simultaneously distancing itself. Instead, the new party positioned itself as a virtuous collective of concerned "common" people who had been forced to enter the unsavory world of politics in an attempt to fix the system from within because it had been unable to change it from the outside (Bornstein & Sharma 2016:83). This allowed Delhiites who otherwise distrusted politicians, like the JJ residents in my study, to nevertheless embrace AAP and its brand of 'non-politics.' The fact that Arvind Kejriwal had established himself as a social activist through his work on government transparency through advocacy of the RTI Act and more stringent legislation against corruption further strengthened his position.

Moreover, Kejriwal as the national convener of the newly established AAP personified the dominant image of 'the aam aadmi' within popular discourse. Son of an electrical engineer, Kejriwal was born in Haryana and grew up 'middle-class,'[132] living in several North Indian towns. After graduating with a degree in mechanical engineering from IIT Kharagpur, and briefly working for Tata Steel, he entered the Indian civil service where he worked for the Indian Revenue Service (IRS). Being disillusioned by the corruption he apparently witnessed first-hand while working for the IRS, he established an NGO[133] called *Parivartan*[134] in Delhi to address corruption and help citizens, particularly poor slum and JJ residents, access government services (Wyatt 2015: 168-9). He eventually took an extended leave from his position with the IRS to focus on his NGO and to campaign for government transparency in what ultimately became the Right to Information Act,

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[132] With the exception of the conspicuously wealthy or poor, the term seemed to be used by most Indians to self-identify—ranging from entry-level workers in government agencies living in small rented flats, to those with professional degrees living in ancestral homes (see 'Whose City?' section in chapter 4). Kejriwal's education and family background indicate that he falls within the higher end of the 'middle-class' socio-economic spectrum.

[133] While Parivartan functions like and is widely viewed as an NGO by the media and the public, it is not officially registered as such (Bornstein & Sharma 2016:82).

[134] 'Parivartan' is a Hindi term meaning 'change' or 'revolution'

first at the state-level in Delhi in 2001, then nationally in 2005. By the time he became involved

with the IAC in 2011, he had broadened his focus beyond transparency and RTI work to include

wider governance reform and had established a network of social activist supporters in Delhi

through the continued work of his NGO (Wyatt (2015:168); Bornstein & Sharma (2016:82)). As

the face of the new party, Arvind Kejriwal signaled that AAP was the party of the hard-working

middle-class 'common man,' concerned by the corruption of the current political system, and

committed to advocating for government reform and bureaucratic efficacy. More importantly for

many JJ residents, Kejriwal's established work with similar communities through *Parivartan*

indicated that AAP would champion their cause if elected into office. Thus, building on Kejriwal's

reputation for social activism and incorporating pressing and timely issues in Delhi such as

women's safety and the rising cost of basic resources; by April 2013, AAP had started to gain a

steady following in the city and announced its intent to contest in the upcoming local Legislative

Assembly Elections in December.

Appropriating Symbols and Depoliticizing Governance

"Don't underestimate the power of a common man!"

Shahrukh Khan in Chennai Express (2013)
Repeated refrain from popular Bollywood Film

The *Aam Aadmi* trope is ubiquitous within the Indian popular imaginary, and easily

accessible across social, religious, and economic strata. 'Aam Aadmi' is frequently referenced in

popular Bollywood films, political speeches, media reports, and casual social conversations. Like

many over-used terms, it is vague and lacks a consistent and broadly agreed-upon definition.

Exactly who constitutes the ranks of the 'common man' is largely dependent on the context in

which it arises and the interlocutors who draw upon it. It is most generally defined by what it is

not—the 'aam aadmi' is not unduly privileged or powerful. More significantly, the term has an

overwhelmingly positive connotation which implies an inherent moral fortitude, similar to that of

comparable terms in English such as 'salt-of-the-earth' or 'average joe.' Like these terms, it validates the legitimacy of those it identifies by marking them as the majority and thus the *authentic* citizenry of the nation. By naming the new political party the Aam Aadmi Party, its founders automatically tapped into and attempted to appropriate a positive symbol embedded within the national imaginary and with whom many Indians already identified.

As the party gained popularity, those wanting to remain politically neutral or those simply making social observations were compelled to be intentional about differentiating between the party and the 'aam aadmi' at large due to the ubiquity of the term within conversation. For instance, while discussing the 'informal' economy in Delhi during the panel on 'inclusive urbanization' at the SPA discussed in the previous chapter, Mr. Dharmendra Kumar of FIUPW made the following clarification, "As aam aadmi…*and I don't mean the new party*…we have all as aam aadmi seen certain trends because of globalization…like the impact of the metro on rickshaw-wallahs, impact of fly-overs on pedestrians and cyclists etcetera." Whether one supported the party or not, its use of such a ubiquitous term forced people to acknowledge it, and perhaps even engage in discussions of the party, during routine conversation. This was particularly evident during the months leading up to the Delhi elections in 2013, due to the already widespread political discourse of that period.

Similarly, the AAP, like its predecessor IAC,[135] deployed symbols and language closely associated with Gandhi and the independence movement within its social mobilization campaigns. The adoption of the 'Gandhi cap' imprinted with AAP on the side as part of the party's standard attire while campaigning, attempted to symbolically align the party with the 'father' of the modern Indian nation. In doing so, the AAP further attempted to re-appropriate this Gandhian symbol from

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[135] For a discussion of the IACs deployment of Gandhian symbols during its 2011-2012 anti-corruption movement, see Bornstein & Sharma (2016).

the Congress Party, whose members had heretofore regularly utilized the cap along with the Nehru jacket arguably as a sartorial nod to these important national figures and to the fact that Gandhi and Nehru were themselves members of the historic Congress Party (INC). Similarly, by employing *darnas* [sit-ins] and other forms of civil-disobedience to pursue legislative change, even after being elected into political office,[136] AAP invoked the Gandhian *Satyagraha* movement. More explicitly, the party's characterization of its advocacy for decentralized governance nationally, as well as its push for representative self-rule in Delhi (which, as the 'national capital territory,' remained largely under the jurisdiction of the central government) as a call for *Swaraj* [self-rule] was a direct invocation of the anti-imperial 'Swaraj' movement for independence from British colonial rule of the early Twentieth Century. By appropriating these symbols connected to the very foundation of the contemporary Indian nation, particularly Gandhi's "path of truth," the AAP positioned itself on a moral high-ground which in-turn allowed it to claim political legitimacy as a "keeper of the public interest" in what Bornstein & Sharma (2016) call "the arena of technomoral politics" wherein "various social actors translate moral projects into technical, implementable terms as laws or policies, as well as justify technocratic acts…as moral imperatives" (77).

The AAP's choice of the *jhadu*, a traditional short broom made from a bundle of dried straw or grass attached at one end, as its official party symbol also warrants some analysis. The explicit reason for this choice given by the party is that it represents AAP's mission to "sweep out" corruption and clean the political system. In this respect, it is consistent with the other symbols deployed by the party in that it positions AAP as the 'clean' and 'pure' representative of the

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[136] In late January, 2014, Arvind Kejriwal, recently elected CM of Delhi staged a 32-hour *dharna* demanding that five police officers involved in what he claimed to be the 'mishandling' of two recent cases be suspended from duty, and further demanded that the Delhi Police be placed under the jurisdiction of the Delhi government instead of its current jurisdiction under the central government (Lalchandani & Jha 2014).

'common' citizen poised to cleanse the otherwise debased and 'dirty' political system. Following AAPs victory in the 2013 Delhi Legislative Assembly Elections, one *TOI* article pointed to a local internet merchant offering jhadus at a discounted celebratory price and proclaimed, "with this, all the aam aadmi's can join the movement for a corruption-free Delhi and celebrate the birth of a new India" ("Jhaadu gets new…" 2014). However, the classed connotation of the *jhadu* as a symbol also bears consideration. As Devaki Jain (2013) observed about the celebration following the AAP's victory in the 2013 Delhi Legislative Assembly elections, "A television screen where scores of supporters and well-wishers can be seen waving *jhadus* instead of flags or face masks or even candles, felt good—as if the celebration was not just focused on the AAP but also focused on the less privileged, on the working classes—the sweepers." Indeed, while the broom may be a common household item, as a symbol it is particularly evocative of those whose lives and livelihoods are closely linked to its use—domestic workers and street sweepers. Thus, by choosing it as the party's official symbol, the AAP signaled to the city's poorer residents its recognition that the *aam aadmi* was constituted by more than just the middle-class, while simultaneously signifying the 'sweeping out' of corruption to both middle-class and poor Delhiites alike.

Through the appropriation of deeply embedded nationalist symbols such as *Swaraj*, *Satyagraha*, and Gandhian social activism along with the malleable concept of the disempowered but morally upright *aam aadmi*, the AAP discursively erased the identity distinctions widely used within contemporary Indian politics and instead constructed a citizenry defined by its shared national identity and its frustration with an elite political class which had grown corrupt, opaque, and inefficient. Expanding on a long-standing idealized notion of India as a secular nation united in its diversity, one of the party's founding members Anand Kumar published a "letter of intent"

in the *EPW* stating that AAP's priorities would include, "challenging discourses of power based on caste, region, and religion" (2013:11).

After critiquing identity and interest-group based electoral politics for being divisive, Kumar asserts that a major challenge for the nascent party would be to make sure that AAP is "inviting enough for common people as individual citizens—not as members of a primordial community or a modern interest group—as an electoral platform on the basis of its agenda and campaign system" (Ibid: 14). The underlying implication is that the "individual citizen" identity can and should be parsed out and prioritized over all other competing group or interest-based identities in order to build a new and healthy political system. Correspondingly, the party could subsume potentially conflicting interests around economic, regional, caste or religious disparities under the banner of a shared *aam aadmi* and *citizen* identity. Moreover, the discursive construction of an elite political class and its corporate counterpart for which it served as "crony," served as external "others" against whom accusations of perpetuating inequality and subverting democratic imperatives could be launched without fracturing the unity of the *aam citizenry*.

In addition to the party's appropriation of cross-cutting and its discursive erasure of distinctive identities, a critical factor in the AAP's ability to draw supporters from disparate backgrounds was its active depoliticization of governance into a technocratic endeavor and its corresponding attempts to reconfigure the individual's relationship to the state. Despite the party's consistent moralizing rhetoric, AAP leaders like Kejriwal were intentional about distancing the party from any distinct ideology—political or otherwise. As Patnaik (2011) and Roy (2011) point out, the "fuzzy" framing of issues such as corruption, and I would add unequal access to basic services or the persistence of gender based violence, not as symptomatic of structural inequality or patriarchy but rather as "moral problems" removes the necessity of any critical analyses of these

issues from an ideologically situated standpoint. As a result, AAP was able to rally support around such issues from individuals with otherwise contradictory ideological standpoints because it did not require them to cohere to a shared political ideology but only to be righteously indignant towards corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, or violence against women (in public). Correspondingly, the solutions to these moral problems were similarly framed *not* as political but as a matter of effective and efficient bureaucratic governance. As Bornstein and Sharma (2016) assert, "The problems of the ordinary public could not have any ideological color, Kejriwal implied, and neither did their solutions. Reforming the government was a task to be undertaken by idealistic, upstanding, and skilled people, and that was the end of it" (83).

Beyond its function of garnering the party followers from different ideological backgrounds, the AAP's active depoliticization of governance also attempted to shift the individual 'citizen's' relationship to the state by reframing the government and its institutions as primarily providers of entitlements—services, resources, and protections. This reconfiguration of the relationship between individuals and the state collapses the classed distinctions drawn by Chatterjee (2004) and others between the performative citizenship and political engagement of 'civil society' and that of 'political society,' wherein the first group is constituted by elite rights-bearing citizens who have a moral stake in the sovereignty of the state and participate in shaping it on a legislative level; and the latter group is constituted by poor 'populations' who actively participate in how they will be 'governed' through negotiations for certain entitlements but aren't recognized as 'proper' citizens. Instead, within the framework offered by AAP, the primary mode of political engagement lays in the participation of a socio-economically undifferentiated citizenry in decentralized governance, particularly through demands for certain services, resources, and protections which are characterized as 'rights' to which all *aam aadmi* are entitled.

Accordingly, the state's paramount function becomes ensuring the equitable and efficient provision of these basic services, resources, and protections. Similar to the ways in which neoliberal restructuring of international development has resulted in the emptying and bureaucratization of terms like 'democracy' and 'empowerment' (Cruikshank (1999); Sharma (2008)), 'politics' becomes reduced to a technocratic instrument of service delivery devoid of ideology. During the 2013 Delhi Legislative Assembly election campaign and its aftermath, the promise of passing a *Jan Lokpal* bill to fight corruption, the promise of water and electricity subsidies and, to a lesser extent, the formation of a 'women's protection force' (Mahila Sureksha Dal) to ensure women's safety formed the primary foci of the AAP's governance plan for Delhi.

Nevertheless, while a major critique against the previous government was bureaucratic opacity and poor/unequal service delivery due to corruption; once in office, the AAP government seemed to lack *practical* alternatives for effectively addressing bureaucratic efficiency and equitable service delivery. For instance, in early January, 2014, Kejriwal announced that the AAP government would provide free water for households that used 20kl of water or less per month, stating "It is the duty of each government to ensure that the people get this basic supply" ("Gov't must supply" 2014). He added that he would initiate an assessment to ensure that the DJB installed water-meters were working correctly. While this initiative was framed as an attempt to ensure equitable access to water by offering a financial relief to lower-income households, some critics noted that it left out a significant segment of the population it was claiming to assist because it only impacted those households with metered connections in their homes (Akram 2014). Meanwhile, it did nothing to improve water access for slum and JJ residents who were primarily dependent on communal taps with an inconsistent water supply or DJB tankers, around the arrival of which many residents (primarily women) were required to schedule their daily activities.

Similarly, the AAP government attempted to operationalize its participatory governance goals by having MLAs visit their constituencies to gather their concerns face-to-face, as well as having public hearings open to all with Kejriwal for Delhiites to request direct "grievance redressal" for their problems (Chitlangia 2014). However, the first *Janta Durbar*[137] [Public court/hearing] held outside the Secretariat on January 11, 2014, had to be cut-short and plans for such future *durbars* were put on hold indefinitely. This occurred after the crowd of over twenty-thousand attendees, including displaced JJ residents seeking re-settlement housing and those who had been unable to get ration-cards issued due to demands for bribes, rushed the stage where Kejriwal sat and nearly trampled him in their attempts to have their grievances heard (Pandit et al 2014).

Additionally, just as the 'common' public and their problems were framed as apolitical by Kejriwal, government officials were similarly expected to approach their jobs and the tasks they entailed devoid of any 'political' or ideological perspective. This became particularly evident early into AAP's 2014 tenure in Delhi government when party officials insisted that Barkha Singh, the sitting (BJP) chief of the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW), resign from her position as her investigations into the legality and appropriateness of the recent actions of (AAP) Law Minister Somnath Bharti towards some African women living in South Delhi were evidence of her being 'political.' The law minister, along with several area resident (Indian) men, had led a midnight 'vigilante' raid into the shared apartment of some Ugandan women living in the Khirki Extension

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[137] Interestingly, the term 'durbar' is rooted in the Mughal imperial era, where rulers would hold 'durbars' or public audiences where their subjects could approach them with problems for redressal, conflicts to resolve, etc. The AAP government's choice to use this language within the context of operationalizing "participatory democracy" seems counterintuitive. Moreover, if one uses the 'durbar' template as a way to characterize these interactions between city residents and Kejriwal, or MLAs and their constituents, it brings to mind the very patron-client relationships which AAPs 'participatory democracy' was meant to counteract.

neighborhood of Delhi after some neighbors had claimed that the apartment was the site of a drug and prostitution ring.[138]

While the underlying complaint of the AAP representatives against Singh seemed to be about partisanship, their explicit critique was that "an organization like [DCW] should be headed by an apolitical person," and that her public statements about the raid and her political language was "not in keeping with the dignified position she holds" ("Gov't decries 'politics'" 2014). In contrast, Bharti's decision to conduct the raid despite his lack of jurisdictional authority or the lack of evidence warranting intervention of law enforcement was not condemned as *undignified* considering his post of law minister. More significantly, it was neither framed as 'political' nor symptomatic of embedded xenophobic ideology which particularly criminalizes Africans. Rather it was touted by Bharti and other APP leaders as the unfortunate but necessary manifestation of 'self-rule' wherein the law minister was forced to prioritize the demands/claims of the (legitimate) area residents when faced with a 'corrupt' police department unwilling to address crime in a residential neighborhood. Indeed, Kejriwal even staged a *dharna* in-part demanding the suspension and investigation of the police officers who had refused to conduct the raid in Khirki Extenstion (Lalchandani & Jha 2014).[139]

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[138] See further description of this event in the *'Where are your people from?'* section of chapter 2.

[139] See footnote 136 above

'*Nayak*': Kejriwal as the Anti-politician & Defender of the Poor

"Yes, I am an anarchist. There is unrest in every house. Now we have to spread this unrest to the homes of home minister Sushilkumar Shinde and the police commissioner."

Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM
(01/21/14)

While the rise of the AAP and Kejriwal on the Delhi political scene in 2013 had largely garnered positive coverage within mainstream media outlets such as the *TOI,* similar to that of the 2011-2012 anti-corruption protests; by February 2014, there had been a conspicuous shift towards criticism. As AAP members continued to deploy protest tactics such as *dharnas* and attempted 'grass-roots governance' by way of mass durbars, they received increasing accusations of 'populism' and 'anarchy' by the media and middle-class Delhiites. Less than a week before Kejriwal resigned from his position of Delhi's CM, the *TOI* published a political cartoon[140] that showed the *Sansad Bhavan* (Parliament House) in the background surrounded by a massive crowd of people wearing Gandhi caps and waving signs. The illustration was captioned at the top with "Coming soon…" and in the foreground was a grey-haired man (also wearing a Gandhi cap and holding a sign) speaking to a red-haired white woman with a camera—presumably a tourist. The dialogue bubble above the man's head read, "No, this's not a dharna…this is a parliament session…" While earlier *TOI* articles had described AAP as illustrative of the "winds of change" (Pandit 2013) and the birth of a "new India" ("Jhaadu gets new…" 2014), it now described AAP's durbar "fiasco" as a "peril of populism" (Pandit et al 2014), and declared that the "Capital [was] under CM siege" when Kejriwal began a *dharna* demanding the punishment of certain police officers (Lalchandani & Jha 2014). It even published an article exploring whether he could

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[140] Image and accompanying article available at: <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/sunday-times/deep-focus/Politics-Bachao-Andolan/articleshow/30084081.cms>>

"technically" be described as an anarchist complete with commentary from political scientists and an analysis of the Greek etymology of the term (Arora 2014).

Even so, as is evident from the introductory quote for this section, Kejriwal did not deny or reject this increasingly popular accusation. Rather, he embraced it as an extension of his 'anti-politics' persona. However, unlike his previous dissociations with traditional politics which had garnered him support across class lines, his willing adoption of the "anarchist" moniker seemed to have the effect of alienating some of his middle and upper-class supporters. As one particularly critical *TOI* article titled "Our Permanent Revolutionary" proclaimed "Kejriwal is Indian democracy's Trotsky. He's good at interrogating power but it is bad news when he has power." Writing of what he described as Kejriwal's fantasy for a permanent revolution, the author added "like Trotsky, Kejriwal seems incapable of understanding that people—aam aadmi—are unwilling and uninterested in being instruments of continual change" (S. Chakrabarti 2014). Similarly, I routinely heard conversations in coffee shops in South Delhi, between my landlord and his friends, my neighbors, and even my previously pro-AAP acquaintances from academic circles criticize AAPs apparent 'inability to govern.'

Although the public critiques of Kejriwal among the middle-class weren't explicitly about class, their underlying concerns of AAP's 'populist' government giving too much say to the "masses" or a "mob mentality" were indeed very classed with inherent assumptions about what the irrational, uneducated, and impassioned 'population' would inevitably do if given too much say over governance. This fear is aptly illustrated in a political cartoon by Ajit Ninan published by the *TOI* on February 11, 2014—merely three days prior to Kejriwal's resignation. Entitled 'Reverse Engineer,' the cartoon consisted of three consecutive renderings of Kejriwal dressed in his signature scarf and Gandhi cap stamped with the AAP logo. In the first rendering, he is walking

with his head held high holding the party's symbol *jhadu* [broom] against his shoulder, and under this picture is the caption 'Visionary.' The second rendering has him walking with his knees bent and an angry expression on his face, while the *jhadu* has been replaced by a bat which he is holding in front of him with both hands—presumably prepared to swing. The caption under this picture reads 'Anarchist.' The final rendering of Kejriwal has him bent all the way forward dragging his knuckles on the ground as he walks. The bat has been replaced by a much bigger club, reminiscent of 'caveman' drawings, carried over one shoulder while his teeth are visible and clenched, and smoke emanates from his nostrils. The caption under this picture reads 'Revolutionary.' Taken together, the three 'portraits' bring to mind the frequently reproduced depictions of "the evolution of man," except that they imply the "devolution" of Kejriwal. The illustration's critique, which mirrors that of many middle-class Delhiites, relies on a shared disdain for Kejriwal's alleged descent into the "primitive" and "uncultivated," and has clearly classed overtones.

However, Kejriwal's[141] reputation remained particularly strong among the JJ resident women with whom I interacted. Indeed, his resignation after only 49 days in office was more commonly taken as an indictment of the corrupt political system. He was seen as the victim of the malice and connivance of the other political parties who did not want to see him succeed in his attempts to change the system and thus lose their own power. During his brief term as CM, Kejriwal had managed to engage many otherwise marginalized populations within routine bureaucratic processes. For instance, he had invited city residents to collectively submit manifestos of their needs from the government—the first of which had been from an organization of homeless

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[141] I rarely heard JJ residents talk about AAP as a party. Rather, they spoke specifically about Kejriwal and everything 'he' was trying to do.

and working "street children" named *Badhte Kadam*[142] demanding to be granted "legal identity" (presumably official ID cards) and that they be allowed to participate in government meetings held to discuss matters related to them ("Streetchildren fax…" 2013). He had also asked residents to bring their bureaucratic issues directly to him via the short-lived *Janta Durbars* or their neighborhood AAP representatives during their weekly visits to their constituencies in attempts to circumvent the network of bureaucratic brokers. On a more symbolic level, he had invited a JJ resident cycle-rickshaw puller as his guest to cut the ribbon during the inauguration of a government hospital ("rickshaw puller…" 2014). While most of these actions proved to be impractical, they nonetheless seemed to have garnered him approval among many poor and JJ residents.

In early February, 2014, prior to Kejriwal's resignation, I visited Kalandar Colony to talk to several resident women. During a conversation about the irregularity of their water access through the communal tap which only has running water between 1 and 3 hours a day depending on the season,[143] I asked the women if there had been any improvement in their water access since AAP took office roughly a month prior. Improved water access had been one of the party's major platforms, and one of Kejriwal's early actions as CM and thus chairperson of the DJB had been to "crack-down" on private water tankers that extract groundwater for commercial sale and to offer the water subsidy discussed above. While Padma and Raj said they hadn't seen any changes yet, Bidya-ji quickly added, "yes, but Arvind Kejriwal is there, if people let him work properly, if there is agreement then he will do something." When I asked them if they had voted for him and AAP in the December elections, they said they had wanted to but didn't think he would win so they had

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[142] While the direct translations for "Badhte" and "Kadam" is "increasing" and "step," taken together the phrase roughly translates to "Forward" or "Moving ahead"

[143] As in most JJCs I visited, water in Kalandar Colony was scarcer during the hot summer months.

voted like they had in the past. Padma admitted, "I voted for the lotus [BJP]. I won't lie. But did not expect that he will get 28 seats, I thought he will get only 2 to 4 seats," to which Raj added "But if we knew that he will grab so many seats from there, we would have voted for him here also!" Nodding, Bidya-ji confidently proclaimed "He will win, He knows what he is doing!" Even though none of them had voted for him, and despite their general distrust of politicians and bureaucrats, all of the four women in our discussion believed that Kejriwal would advocate for their needs.

Two weeks later, a few days after Kejriwal had resigned, I spoke to another group of women while accompanying Shashi on one of her bi-weekly visits to Geeta Colony. While discussing the cost of living in Delhi, a resident in her late forties named Mukta told me, "since the time Kejriwal came, we were getting all facilities, vegetables also became cheaper," and then added, shaking her head, "but they have removed him." Later in the conversation, while discussing electricity charges, Urvashi told me, "This time ... this time it became cheaper because of Kejriwal. Before a high bill used to come, but this time with this government it became cheaper. It became almost half!" Like Mukta, she added grimly, "he has resigned, let us see what happens now." Towards the end of our conversation, after discussing the process of getting voter cards and voting, the women told me that in the December elections, they had all voted for different candidates, some saying they voted for BJP or Congress, and a few saying they had voted for AAP. But for the upcoming national elections and the inevitable special elections that would be held following Kejriwal's early resignation, Kanta explained, "We are thinking of who has supported us so much, next time we will certainly vote for him [Kejriwal]!" The other women all nodded in agreement. Similar to Kalandar Colony, Kejriwal's brief term in office had not dissuaded the women of Geeta Colony, but rather ingratiated him with even those who hadn't originally voted for him.

Likewise, I noticed a similar appreciation and support for Kejriwal, during yet another group conversation with women in Aradhaknagar early the following month. Krishna-ji, whom Lalita had jokingly told me was "trying to meet Kejriwal" during my very first visit, spoke passionately about what he had accomplished during his short tenure as CM. She told me, "Once Kejriwal came, he made things a bit strict. The poor were relieved a bit, in everything we got…even in hooliganism! And fear came in people... The *big* [police] officers that are sitting…the clerks that are there, their chairs were shaken! So madam we want that government!" Later in the conversation, while the women commiserated about their frustrations with extortion by police, Ganga exclaimed:

> If they kill, let them kill us... It is not as though, if one is killed 10 will be born. If 1 is killed—a poor man, *lakhs* will be born! He [Kejriwal] came like a *nayak*![144] In the same way fear spread among people here, Delhi Police and all started fearing! They used to take bribes from us. That had stopped. It was entirely stopped!

Taking up Ganga's characterization of Kejriwal as a *nayak*, the teenaged Kamla added:

> Here a person like 'Nayak' is needed…Anil Kapoor.[145] Like Kejriwal, he came but they didn't let him live, *he would have done a lot*, BJP people are pulling his leg,[146] Congress is pulling his leg...if 100 dogs are behind a man he will automatically go mad. They didn't let him do anything.

The statements by both Ganga and Kamla clearly illustrate a shared perception of Kejriwal as a hero and champion of poor Delhiites such as themselves. Moreover, Kamla's statement deploys the term "nayak" not simply to characterize Kejriwal as a 'hero,' but to connect him to the critically acclaimed 2001 Bollywood political thriller of the same name and to the film's protagonist played by Anil Kapoor. In the film, Kapoor's character is a journalist who exposes the corruption of

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[144] 'Nayak' translates to 'hero,' 'leader,' or 'guide.'

[145] Anil Kapoor is a famous Bollywood actor who played the lead role in the 2001 Bollywood film titled *Nayak: The Real Hero*.

[146] The use of this phrase is to indicate 'holding one back' or 'hindering'; not to be confused with the English colloquial phrase which indicates 'making a joke' or 'pranking' someone.

Mumbai's CM by revealing that he had willfully ignored a violent riot in the city—which could have been prevented—for his own political gain. When the CM offhandedly challenges the journalist to try doing his job for even a day, Kapoor's character accepts and enters the political arena. As the new CM, the journalist-turned-politician proves to be quite effective—wiping out corruption and solving the city's economic problems. The parallels are clear, like Kapoor's "Nayak," Kejriwal is an outsider, compelled to enter the unseemly world of politics by his concern for his fellow city-dwellers and the desire to clean-up his city. Unlike in the film however, Kejriwal doesn't emerge victories in his (initial)[147] "confrontation" with the established and "corrupt" political system. Even so, he is perceived as no less a hero and champion of the poor by the women of Aradhaknagar, and conceivably also to the women of Kalandar and Geeta Colony.

The Aam Aurat & Politics

"Are female members of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supposed to identify with the common man? Or is it that at this 'historic juncture,' gender isn't that relevant?"
Sruti Herbert (Qtd in Sreeram 2015)

The question posed by Herbert above warrants some consideration. While 'Aam Aadmi' is often used as a universalizing "genderless" term in the same vain as 'mankind,' it is important to note that it is indeed an explicitly gendered term that centers men. Thus the choice of a political party to use the term, however common, as its official name can at best be read as indicating a lack of reflexive engagement with the politics of gender on the part of the party organizers, if not indicative of the party's embedded patriarchal framework. During my interview with Martha Farrell of PRIA, she implied that for many people the ubiquity of the phrase masks its inherent

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[147] The victory of the Kejriwal led AAP in the 2013 Delhi Legislative Assembly Elections was decided by a split vote where they won 28 out of 70 seats, which in-turn caused much of the gridlock that prevented the party from successfully implementing the various legislative changes promised during the campaign season and prompting Kejriwal to resign rather than compromise on some key bills. In contrast, in 2015 he returned as the CM in a landslide with AAP winning 67 out of 70 seats.

gender bias, saying "For common people, 'Aam Aadmi' just gels so well. You don't see the patriarchy behind it." Adding that she hoped the party would eventually change its name, she asserted that she was willing to "live with it" for the moment because she believed it was the one party which could "actually create a wave of gender-sensitivity within this country." Telling me about a recent meeting she had attended with AAP, Martha seemed to believe the presence of sexism and patriarchal frameworks in the nascent party wasn't purposeful but rather a matter of 'not knowing any better.' As she explained thusly:

> We in fact had a dialogue the other day, Aam Aadmi representatives and people of the NGO sector, mainly women – to discuss 'how do you build a gender component within the Aam Aadmi party?' Because the young women there have equally archaic ideas full of patriarchal concepts—as any other woman who's not been exposed—And how do we address the issue?

For Martha, the party's interest in building a 'gender component[148]' and its willingness to approach NGOs like PRIA for help in that venture indicated its openness toward gender equality and a willingness to change. Yet, even with these NGO meetings and despite AAP's enthusiastic support of the protests and calls for women's safety and 'empowerment' in Delhi following the Nirbhaya attack, by Spring 2014 the party had been publically accused of sexism and male dominance by some of its own female members as well as several women's rights groups.

Following the Khirki Extension incident where AAP Law Minister, Somnath Bharti raided the home of several African women, AAP founding member Madhu Bhaduri drafted a resolution that the party offer a formal apology to the African women for their mistreatment and disavowing any racist comments that had been deployed to justify their treatment. Despite her submission of

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[148] After much dissidence and criticism, in August 2014 AAP launched its "women's wing' named *AAP Ki Mahila Shakti,* which translates to either "AAP's Women's Power" or "Your Women's Power" (if *Aap* is read as the pronoun rather than an acronym for the party's name). Of course, the creation of this 'wing' instead of party wide changes toward substantial inclusion of women could also be seen as a relegation of 'women's issues' to a special interest marginal to the main agenda of the party.

the resolution to the party secretary and its circulation among AAP leaders well in advance of the party's National Council meeting on January 30, 2014, the resolution was left off the meeting agenda. When Bhaduri requested a chance to speak after the last scheduled speaker, she was granted a chance to address the gathering with a "voice of dissent" but was stopped before she finished making her statement—which included a critique of the "humiliation of women" as counter to the message of *insaniyat* [humanism] espoused by Kejriwal. She also pointed out that, even if the African women had been prostitutes as they were accused, their treatment was no more appropriate considering that prostitution is a complex issue which is often predicated on the victimization of women. She cited a report on prostitution published by AAP's "Gender Justice Committee" which she insisted should have been consulted by Bharti before taking any action. She was heckled and shouted at by the AAP council members in attendance, after which her microphone was taken away and she was told by party leader Yogendra Yadav not to make a "spectacle" with the media about the incident (Bhaduri (2014); Dhawan (2014)). She soon left the party citing the party's intolerance of dissent and proclaiming that "AAP has the same mentality as Khap Panchayats[149] on gender justice," and adding that "The Party thinks that humiliating helpless women is justified if it makes the party popular and popularity of the party takes precedence over justice for women," (Ghose 2014). Her exit from the party was later followed by another prominent female member, Shazia Ilmi, who accused AAP of being dominated by a handful of men who allowed "no space for women to in the top level of the decision making process within the party" (Ibid). Echoing this claim, a February 7, 2014 *TOI* headline declared

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[149] Khap panchayats are a councils of clan or village elders which technically have no legal or government recognized authority, but function as informal judicial bodies who deliberate on local social issues and hand down orders/decisions especially in rural areas in northern India. They are often criticized by liberal leaning Indians for perpetuating the mistreatment of women and lower-castes through their verdicts which have included the 'retributive' rape and honor killings of women as punitive measures.

"Angry middle-aged men form 88% of AAP ticket-seekers" adding that top AAP leaders were men between 40-50 years of age with "strong educational backgrounds" (i.e. with college and professional degrees), although the basis for characterizing them as "angry" was unclear.

Nevertheless, as their commentary in the previous section suggests, the reports of the party's sexism and domination by men did not dissuade the women of Aradhaknagar, Geeta Colony, and Kalandar Colony from supporting Kejriwal and his party. In fact, during a visit to Aradhaknagar a few days after the Khirki Extension incident, I overheard two of the resident women (who were not research participants) talking about the scandal. One of the women was saying to the other how the criticism against Bharti was just another example of "people" (presumably from other political parties) trying to remove AAP members from power when they were only looking out for the safety of "common people" like "us." Indeed, Kejriwal's defense of Bharti's actions had been to frame it as a response to the widespread "apathy" of the Delhi police which resulted in their failure to provide a "safe environment for women" ("AAP blames…" 2014). By equating police officers' refusal to arrest the alleged prostitutes and drug-dealers to the ongoing problem of sexual assault against women in Delhi, AAP had managed to frame the law minister's harassment of the *foreign* women as a *defense* of *proper Indian women* who were endangered by the foreigners' alleged illicit activities.

Even so, I would argue that the women's ongoing support for Kejriwal and AAP had more to do with the ubiquity of sexism and male dominance among all political parties than it did a belief that AAP or Kejriwal was particularly gender sensitive or inclusive of women. For instance, while the women's critique of former Delhi CM Sheila Dixit was based on their disappointment in her failure as a woman to ameliorate the struggles of other women; their praise of Kejriwal was linked to what he had or intended to do for them as poor JJ residents. Despite the prominence of a

few women politicians, such as Sonia Gandhi, Sheila Dixit, and Mayawati Prabhu Das,[150] it was no secret that the political arena was dominated by men—many of whom had a history of 'questionable' treatment of women. As Deepti Sreeram (2015) points out citing a 2012 report by the National Election Watch and the Association for Democratic reforms, there were 260 political candidates from a number of parties that year facing various sexual offense charges against women—including 26 from Congress and 24 from BJP (np). On the national level, there has been an as-yet unsuccessful campaign for several years to pass a bill to reserve at least 33% of seats in parliament for women.

In Delhi, during the 2013 local Legislative Assembly elections, women won only 3 out of the possible 70 seats in the Delhi Legislative Assembly; although, notably all three of the women were from AAP.[151] As Krishna-ji told me when I asked her if there were any women pradhans or MLAs from the colony during one of my visits to Aradhaknagar, "We have only seen pants [i.e. men], not the *salwars*[152] [i.e. women]…only pants we have seen, not the *salwars*." Agreeing with Krishna-ji, Seema chuckled and said sarcastically, "here every jhuggi has a pradhan" referring to the final decision making power of the husbands and fathers-in-law in every household. Later returning to the subject of elected office, Seema told me that she *had* actually tried running for office once but had been unsuccessful because the local representatives of the various parties were unwilling to give JJ resident women 'tickets' backing their candidacy. She finished by asking

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[150] Sonia Gandhi has served as the president of the Congress Party since 1998, she is also the widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and daughter in-law of late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Mayawati Prabhu Das is the current Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and was the first Dalit Chief Minister in India, serving as the CM of Uttar Pradesh for four consecutive terms from 1995-2012.

[151] During the 2015 special elections held following Kejriwal's resignation in 2014, six women were elected into the Legislative assembly. Again, all the women were from AAP.

[152] A *Salwar* is a type of traditional trouser worn by women as part of a tunic-trouser set called a *salwar-kemis*. It was the most common type of clothing worn by most of the JJ resident women I interacted with.

rhetorically, "Do jhuggis not have women? Are they not literate?" Later in that same conversation, Maya reiterated the women's shared distrust and dislike of politicians, stating:

> We saw how the *netas* [political leaders] were giving speeches. The fight is going on ...they are removing each other's pants [exposing/ embarrassing each other]. They are lowly people, they are worse than us…even worse than dogs! All the MLAs, all chief ministers, all prime ministers, they talk using shoes and *chappals* [sandals], we all watch TV and news.

Interestingly, by referring to them as 'lowly' and 'worse than dogs,' and by further alluding to them arguing with *chappals*—meant to evoke the image of people fighting in the street waving their shoes and threatening each other in an 'undignified' manner stereotypically associated with poor women—Maya draws on a narrative of 'base' or 'shameful' behavior, to criticize all politicians. This narrative is similar to that deployed by middle-class and media critiques of Kejriwal discussed above. However, her use of this narrative also reverses and redeploys a negative stereotype commonly placed on poor women to refute the notion that the political class is somehow 'above' women like her and her neighbors—whom they preclude from accessing the political arena.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the shared experiences and perceptions that characterize JJ residents' routine encounters with government bureaucracy and other institutions of power. Particularly, it illustrated how a struggle to be heard, along with the frustrations of navigating opaque bureaucracy and government policy, and ongoing attempts to minimize or circumvent the payment of bribes and *haftas* together constitute a significant portion of JJ residents' attempts to fulfill their basic needs. I also juxtapose JJ residents' vociferous distrust of politicians to their active engagement in electoral politics, and argue that voting is deployed within a larger context of ongoing negotiations for (temporary) protections and resources. Extending this exploration of

engagement in electoral politics, I analyze the emergence of AAP and its popularity among Delhi's poor JJ residents. I assert that, to a certain extent, the emergence of Kejriwal, AAP, and their anti-establishment "grass-roots" governance opened some new (albeit short-lived) avenues for JJ resident women to potentially access basic resources and services and have their needs met by allowing them to circumvent established networks of intermediaries and brokers. Through its symbolic incorporation of poor Delhi residents into bureaucratic activities such as participatory governance through *mohalla sabhas* [neighborhood assemblies] or having a cycle-rickshaw puller inaugurate a government hospital, AAP also tenuously elevated the image of poor Delhiites from mere vote-banks to that of constituents to be served equally by the government. Indeed, the persona of Kejriwal as the anti-politician champion of the poor did offer many JJ residents a politician in whom they could believe despite their general distrust of politicians and bureaucrats.

Yet, the brevity of the (initial) AAP government in Delhi and its paucity of practical policies, along with the party's erasure of social identities and the corresponding depoliticization of governance in an attempt to create an undifferentiated citizenry meant that their new policies were unsustainable and often failed to reach those who needed them the most, such as JJ residents. Likewise, the party's emptying of 'women's empowerment' and 'gender equity' to simply mean safety from sexual assault in public (similar to other major parties), meant that there was very little substantive improvement in the lives of most JJ resident women whose daily insecurity encompassed issues such as the looming threat of demolition and the dangers of using community toilets. Therefore, their encounters with state bureaucracy and politics continued to be characterized by the expectation of exploitation and profiteering on the part of those in positions of power; a general frustration with the incomprehensibility of government policies and programs;

an expectation of marginalization by men—whether they be officials or members of their own households, and an ongoing sense of being unheard.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Key Findings

I have argued that the relationship of JJ resident women with the state and their access to the rights and entitlements it guarantees are contoured by dominant discourses on proper Indian womanhood, legitimate belonging, and urban citizenship. Through the analytic chapters, I have examined the ways in which gender and class identities articulate JJ residents' engagements with institutions of power and inform their claims-making strategies as they attempt to fulfill their basic needs. In this conclusion, I identify important and recurrent themes in the chapters, and discuss the dissertation's contribution toward broader understandings of intersectional marginalization, urban citizenship, gender and urban space, and the constitution of 'bare-life.'

Circumscribed Citizenship

In the first analytic chapter, I analyze the narrative construction of "the Delhi woman" within the city's shared imaginary. Guided by the theorizations on 'frames of recognition' and grievable life by Butler (2009) and re-formulations of 'bare life' and 'exception' within the scholarship of Das & Poole (2004); I illustrate the ways in which dominant discourses of "womanhood" exclude poor JJ resident women and thus limit their ability to successfully make gendered claims on the state for protections. Particularly, I argue that through their disproportionate reliance on the lives and experiences of middle-class women in defining who counts as 'the Delhi women' within the city's shared imaginary—and thus that which is readily recognized by the state—dominant discourses have facilitated the rendering of poor JJ resident women as 'ungrievable.' I draw on Phadke et al (2011), Stanko (1990) and others to illustrate how the normalization of 'feminine vulnerability' and the inherent danger of public spaces for women—along with the 'threat' that women supposedly pose to men through the potential of false

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sexual assault claims—limit women's access to full citizenship by curtailing their movements and denying their rights to access the city's spaces. I further argue that these discourses construct a restrictive framework of citizenship for middle-class women that is predicated on their domesticity and 'proper' gendered behavior, but wherein embedded social frameworks that inscribe 'honor' and 'purity' onto their bodies also demand their protection by the state, and thus allows them to make gendered claims on the state for such protections. However, this pervasive definition of "proper womanhood" which centers norms of behavior and respectability emanating from middle-class practices and experiences excludes poor and JJ resident women from making similar protection claims on the state and thus isolates them further within an already marginalized and restrictive gendered citizenship.

Similarly, in chapter 4, I explore the persistent characterization of JJ residents as migrants, criminals, polluters, and state-dependent 'parasites' within dominant discourses to illustrate how their claims on the city's spaces and resources was continually challenged and de-legitimized. Particularly, by framing JJCs and their residents as fundamentally *not of* the city, and even more so as being detrimental to the city's spatial, moral, and economic future, these popular narratives position JJ residents as antithetical to Delhi's 'hard-working, tax-paying, middle-class' residents— in other words, Delhi's *legitimate* citizens. Thus, in the same way that poor and JJ resident women are excluded from the forms of gendered citizenship available to middle-class women, *all* JJ residents are excluded through the construction of middle and upper-class Delhiites as *the* citizenry within the dominant discourse of the city. This is further reified through the success of middle-class PILs calling for the demolition of JJCs and the popularity of "slum-free world class city" narratives.

Discourse and the Hegemonic Domain of Power

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that particular narratives within dominant discourses have tangible material effects, particularly on those with intersectional identities that locate them within the margins of said discourses. In chapter 3, I argue that the narrow boundaries of womanhood discursively constructed and circulated by the middle-class and mainstream media work to erase the experiences and suffering of JJ resident women. Similarly, in chapter 4 I argue that the routine deployment of narratives that characterize JJ residents as migrants, 'parasites,' dangerous, morally corrupt, unhygienic, and obstacles to development all work to de-legitimize their claims on the city's spaces and resources. Here, I further assert that these narratives and discourses function within what Collins (2000) calls the hegemonic domain of power to justify oppression. The wide-spread accessibility of these narratives, the ease with which they can be drawn upon by individuals occupying various social locations, and their persistence (in less conspicuous iterations) even among allies of (women) JJ residents indicates their hegemony within the city's shared imaginary. Consequently, their function of erasing and 'unrecognizing' JJ resident women, or framing JJ residents as antithetical to the norms and shared vision of Delhi as a world class city, each work to legitimize the oppression of JJ residents. For instance, they allow for the demolition and displacement of hundreds of families living in JJCs by justifying it as essential for city development or the preservation of public (read: middle-class) interests.

Bureaucracy and the Structural Domain of Power

Similar to the function of discourses discussed above, I also argue that bureaucracy—its networks and practices—operates within the structural domain of power (Collins 2000), organizing oppression through its various institutions to reproduce the subordination of JJ resident women. In chapter 5, I illustrated the routine struggles of JJ resident women as they attempted to

navigate opaque and illegible bureaucratic processes in their attempts to access basic resources and services. The lack of transparency surrounding bureaucratic processes, the multiplicity of overlapping policies and their inconsistencies, and the frequency with which programs are introduced and discarded make important services and entitlements essentially inaccessible to JJ resident women. This inaccessibility is further compounded by the complex networks of extralegal brokers and intermediaries that operate as gatekeepers to state resources. Together these bureaucratic practices reproduce the subordination of JJ resident women by blocking their access to potential resources and programs that might uniquely benefit them and ameliorate certain conditions of poverty that characterize their lives. Here I draw upon Akhil Gupta's theorizations and assertions that bureaucracy's indifference to the arbitrary outcomes of its practices is central to producing and reifying the suffering of the poor (2012:6).

Claims-Making in the Margins

In chapter 4, I argue that slum and JJ residents' limited access to formal systems of property and judicial recourse often requires that they actively negotiate for governmental recognition and entitlements through variously framed individual or collective claims. Due to the precarious legality surrounding most JJCs and their claims on the land they occupy, negotiations rarely occur through direct appeals to the judicial system but rather require ambiguously legal and temporary agreements between JJ residents and individuals within various positions of power or influence in the city's complex socio-political networks. Depending on the particular contexts within which certain claims are being made, these negotiations may utilize a rights-based approach and cite instances of temporary or partial recognition from the government, point to the contribution and investment of the claims-makers in their communities or the city, or attempt to establish length of tenancy to secure housing tenure. Alternatively, they may attempt to garner empathetic support

from bureaucrats and middle-class residents by utilizing a language of suffering and making appeals to conscience to mobilize various audiences on their behalf. Here I draw on global and historical deployments of the language and exposure of suffering as a tool for marginalized and oppressed populations to publically 'shame' their oppressors' *immoral* actions, and to mobilize potential allies with more socio-political capital through calls on their "humanity." I argue that the selective deployment of various rhetorical devices, such as storytelling and testimony, to assert claims ranging from (better) access to certain services and resources, to the protection of their homes from imminent demolition by JJ residents can be read as a form of resistance and political engagement by marginalized urban citizens.

'Corruption' and Encounters with Institutions of Power

In chapter 5, I argue that there was a shared perception among most of my JJ resident interlocutors that corruption and profiteering permeated institutions of power. Their routine encounters with individuals occupying positions of power relative to themselves were characterized with an expectation of exploitation. As such, their negotiations within such interactions were preemptively aimed at minimizing this exploitation as they attempted to have particular needs met. Narratives of corruption which circulate among JJ residents through the re-telling of particular encounters with bureaucrats and state agents, or in the form of rumor and speculation/paranoia on otherwise opaque institutions and practices construct a shared imaginary of an insidious and far-reaching network of power. As the commentary from my JJ resident women interlocutors throughout the various chapters illustrates, this notion of exploitation and domination as constitutive of power is conceptualized at all levels. Seema's casual assertion that "every jhuggi has a pradhan" points to one manifestation of such domination within the context of a household, while the various discussions of interpersonal encounters with bribe-demanding pradhans, police

officers, and politicians indicates its persistence (with varying detrimental effects) all the way up to the highest levels of political office.

In addition to informing the strategies JJ residents employ when interacting with individuals occupying positions of power, the particular narratives of corruption embedded with indictments of unscrupulousness and venality can also be read as resistant counter-narratives to the dominant characterizations of JJ residents as criminal and morally corrupt. Here, I draw broadly on theorizations around the function of 'rumor' as a mode of communication deployed by marginalized or 'subaltern' groups to mobilize resistance (Rudé (1964); Guha (1983); Bhabha (1994)). In certain respects, the circulation of stories about corruption circulating among JJ residents function similarly to such conceptualizations of 'rumors' in that they coalesce around a shared critique and rejection of a hegemonic system of governance. However, unlike rumors, they are not anonymous but rather are often rooted in testimonies of personal experience. Also, these narratives of corruption work more to *name* the routine practices of power rather than to mobilize active resistance. Nevertheless, they serve as a resistive counter-narrative when juxtaposed with the dominant narratives that work to malign the "inherent" character of JJ residents discussed in chapter 4.

Voting as Cynical Pragmatism

In chapter 5, I discussed the simultaneous wide-spread distrust of politicians and consistently high voting rates among JJ residents. I resist the characterization that the system of vote-banks and the cycle of un-fulfilled promises by politicians means that JJ residents are merely 'pawns' within the system of electoral politics. Rather, I argue that the active participation of JJ resident women in voting can be read as a practice of what I'm calling *cynical pragmatism*. As all the JJ resident women I spoke with made clear, they were acutely aware of the fact that while

politicians repeatedly came "with folded hands" to secure the residents' votes during election season, they rarely fulfilled any of their promises of housing security, infrastructural upgrades, or improved access to basic services. Yet they continue to vote because, voting—particularly when consolidated at the colony level into a 'vote-bank'—provides them potential leverage, within their otherwise limited access to social capital, through which to temporarily secure tenancy. As Mahesh of Kalandar Colony pointed out, "what politician wants to lose their vote-bank" by allowing them to be dispersed or displaced to another politician's constituency due to demolition? Similarly, because the routine operations of the bureaucratic system rely heavily on personal connections between individuals occupying particular offices, the successful mobilization of votes for particular candidates can facilitate access to specific resources or services.

For instance, in May 2012, while in Delhi to conduct pre-dissertation research, I accompanied an SPA student while she conducted a survey on water access in a JJ resettlement colony in Dwarka. During an extended conversation with one of the residents, she told us that during the last local election they had elected an MLA who had close ties to electricity providers. As a result, their access to electricity had significantly improved in terms of consistency and they had fewer complaints about price-gouging. However, she also told us that the politician who had *lost* in that election, had close contacts within the DJB but now refused to utilize this relationship to help address some persistent issues of water access in the colony as retribution for losing the election. This illustrates that in certain contexts, voting can be deployed to facilitate access to much needed resources—although the success of this mobilization may be partial and have unanticipated consequences in other areas. Similarly, common practice of political parties distributing cash incentives to secure votes or to recruit JJ residents to campaign for them, as with Champa in Savda

Ghevra, offers immediate infusions of (albeit small sums of) cash otherwise not accessible, which could prove vital during acute moments of financial vulnerability.

Scholarly Contributions

This dissertation is an ethnographic study of the intersectional marginalization of women living in Delhi's jhuggi jhopris and their negotiations for full citizenship and rights to the city. As such, it is concerned with understanding what it means to legitimately belong in Delhi, particularly for poor women living in perpetual precariousness. It builds on the recent scholarship on cities as spaces for gendered performance, the inaccessibility of urban spaces to women, and issues of women's safety in cities (Lukose 2009; Khan 2007; Tawa Lama-Rewal 2011; Phadke et al 2011; Viswanath & Mehrotra 2008) by putting them into conversation with theorizations of intersectionality and matrices of oppression (Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989 & 1991; Yuval-Davis 2006) to uncover gaps in narrativized experiences of women in Indian cities and the scholarly, political, and organizational approaches to address women's access to urban public space.

Particularly, I use an intersectional framework to expand the analytical scope of both the literature on urban citizenship and rights to the city—which largely centers poverty and socio-economic class—and the growing literature on women's access to urban space—which largely centers gender—by putting them into conversation within the context of the lives of JJ resident women in Delhi. To clarify, I do not imply that gender analysis is completely absent in existing rights to the city scholarship, or that class analysis is similarly absent from recent literature on women and urban space. Rather, my assertion is that both bodies of literature generally tend to center class or gender respectively as primary identity/analytical categories while utilizing the other as part of a series of secondary additive variables (i.e. race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality). In contrast, I draw on theorizations of intersectionality wherein people's various intersecting social

identities including class and gender are conceptualized as *constitutive* and *inextricable*, not additive. Thus, my point of entry for analysis is not through any overarching category but rather a particular intersection of social identities. By centering the intersectional marginalization of JJ resident women, I am able to simultaneously incorporate both gender and class into my explorations of rights to the city, legitimate belonging, and urban citizenship. This, in-turn, allows for a more textured analysis of the ways in which gender oppression and inaccessibility to urban space are differently articulated at particular class intersections, with the understanding that they can indeed *only* be experienced at the particular intersections of multiple identities.

Moreover, the use of intersectionality and understandings of 'matrices of oppression' to examine dominant narratives of women's empowerment and their right to the city allows for an analysis of the ways in which middle and upper-class women—both within their interpersonal relationships with poor women and as the dominant group upon whom "Indian womanhood" is discursively constituted—sustain and perpetuate the ongoing oppression of poor women. This analysis builds on the critiques of second wave and western feminisms—their erasure of the experiences of women who are *not* white/cis/heterosexual/middle-class as well as their contribution to the ongoing oppression of such women through their tacit or active support of white-supremacist/heteronormative/colonial systems of power—by black feminists (Collins (2000); hooks (1984); Lorde (1984)) and other feminists of color around the world (Abu-Lughod (2000); Mohanty (1991); Ayotte & Husain (2005)).

Similarly, by layering aspects of Butler's (2009) "frames of recognition" with formulations of "bare-life" by Das & Poole (2004), Fitzpatrick (2000), and Gupta (2012) in my analysis of the marginalization and oppression of JJ resident women, I attempt to strengthen and expand the analytical and theoretical scope of both concepts. Particularly, I extend Butler's conceptualization

of the ways in which hegemonic characterizations/framings of acute state violence and victims of said violence circulated through mass media and popular discourse help to construct epistemological 'frames' through which we perceive certain lives as "ungrievable" or "destructible" in times of war to include the ways in which similar hegemonic discourses function within the context of "routine" structural violence—such as the demolition and displacement of JJ residents, the ongoing dangers of inadequate toilet facilities, and the fiscal and sexual harassment of JJ resident women by police officers—to render the lives of poor and JJ resident women as ungrievable.

Likewise, I use this understanding of the function of hegemonic discourses to delve deeper into conceptualizing how 'bare-life' and 'states of exception' are constituted and sustained, which Das & Poole (2004), Fitzpatrick (2001), and Gupta (2012) theorize is broadly through the 'extra-legal'/illegible practices of agents of the state among marginalized communities; through complex legal processes; and through the indifferent and arbitrary practices of state bureaucracy respectively. In doing so I assert that dominant narratives often emerging from the middle-class and circulated through mainstream media and popular discourse—such as a narrow definition of 'proper' Indian womanhood which centers middle-class experiences and practices, and the persistent characterization of JJ residents as migrants, morally corrupt, dangerous etc.—are taken-up by agents and institutions of the state and contour the relationship of the state with its citizens. In this way, such hegemonic discourses help to constitute and perpetuate 'bare-life' and 'states of exception' and their corresponding material effects in tandem with the state practices theorized by the above scholars. Thus, by juxtaposing Butler's (2009) formulations on the constitution of epistemological frames through hegemonic discourse and media circulation as well as Collins' (2000) conceptualization of the hegemonic domain of power, with theorizations of bare-life and

exception that center the state and its practices, I attempt to extend understandings of the production of bare-life to include hegemonic discourse emanating from and widely-circulated by the public.

Furthermore, I expand on this discussion of the power and utility of language and narrative, not only in service of domination and oppression, but also as a medium of claims-making and resistance among marginalized communities. To this end, I draw upon social constructionist literature wherein scholars assert that popular understandings of 'social problems' are constructed through the definitional processes and interactional activities of claims-making (Spector and Kitsuse 1987), as well as scholarship which examines the functions of narrative and rhetorical aspects of such claims-making (Best (1987); Mulcahy (1995); Fortmann (1995)) to connect the language and stories of JJ resident women to that of historical and international social justice and resistance movements such as the Gandhian Satyagraha movement and the U.S. Civil Rights movement. Specifically, I point to the use of both verbal and visual illustrations of suffering by various historical social movements to simultaneously legitimize their claims and condemn the status quo by appealing to the emotions and the 'humanity' of the societies from which they emerge. Correspondingly, I argue that JJ resident women's recounting of personal stories of suffering and injustice to NGO workers, journalists, researchers, and each other can be understood as rhetorical activities deployed by marginal but agentive actors to move their audiences to act in their attempts to secure space and resources in the city. More broadly, such activities exemplify what I've termed a *political deployment of the language of suffering*.

Ultimately, while my dissertation focused on the specific case of JJ residents in Delhi, the issues raised in my research speak to larger issues of intersectional marginalization, urban citizenship, and the ways in which certain lives are de-legitimized and rendered unrecognizable

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through the deployment of monolithic narratives within hegemonic discourses. What's more I illustrate how such discourses are able to render invisible certain communities that embody identities at particular intersections of marginality, not through outright exclusion and negligence but rather through subsuming them within dominant communities. I further point to the ability of hegemonic discourses to narratively construct certain marginalized identities as hyper-visible categories which are nonetheless emptied of nuance and substantive meaning within a shared imaginary. Nevertheless, through explorations of JJ residents' use of storytelling and testimony as rhetorical devices to bolster their claims to the city's spaces and resources, as well as to construct counter-narratives to dominant discourses, I have conversely pointed to certain modes of discursive resistance that can emerge from marginalized urban communities.

Final Thoughts

This document is, at its core, an attempt to advance the telling of the lives of JJ resident women, whose particular intersectional identities have relegated them to "a location that resists telling" (Crenshaw 1989:1242). During my last visit to Aradhaknagar, I sat with Krishna-ji, Seema, and Ganga on a low stone wall across from the park filled with tents. Seema asked me, as she'd done on other occasions, why I came to her colony. As before I tried to articulate my interest in the stories of other women and my particular desire to understand the struggles of marginalized women from their own perspective rather than through the narratives of NGOs and government institutions. Each of the women responded thusly:

> **Seema**: If you tell the truth, all we women are with you... even if you knock on our door at midnight, we will be there for you. But don't let it be that you just spoke and went away... because we have been cheated many times.

> **Krishnaji**: That is what I said, so many came and so many went...

Ganga: …but didn't do anything for us. Many NGOs came here but no one did anything. And you also came from so far. [Pause] So if this has been done... in the future also, things may get done.

Based on their general experiences with bureaucrats, politicians, and NGO workers, the women of Aradhaknagar—or Kalandar and Geeta Colonies—had little reason to trust me. Yet even while ambivalent about my potential ulterior motives, they willingly took time to share their stories and experiences with me. Indeed, I have done nothing for them that might qualitatively improve their lives. I hope, however, that my attempts to honor their truths and convey them in a way that respects their daily struggles have been successful.
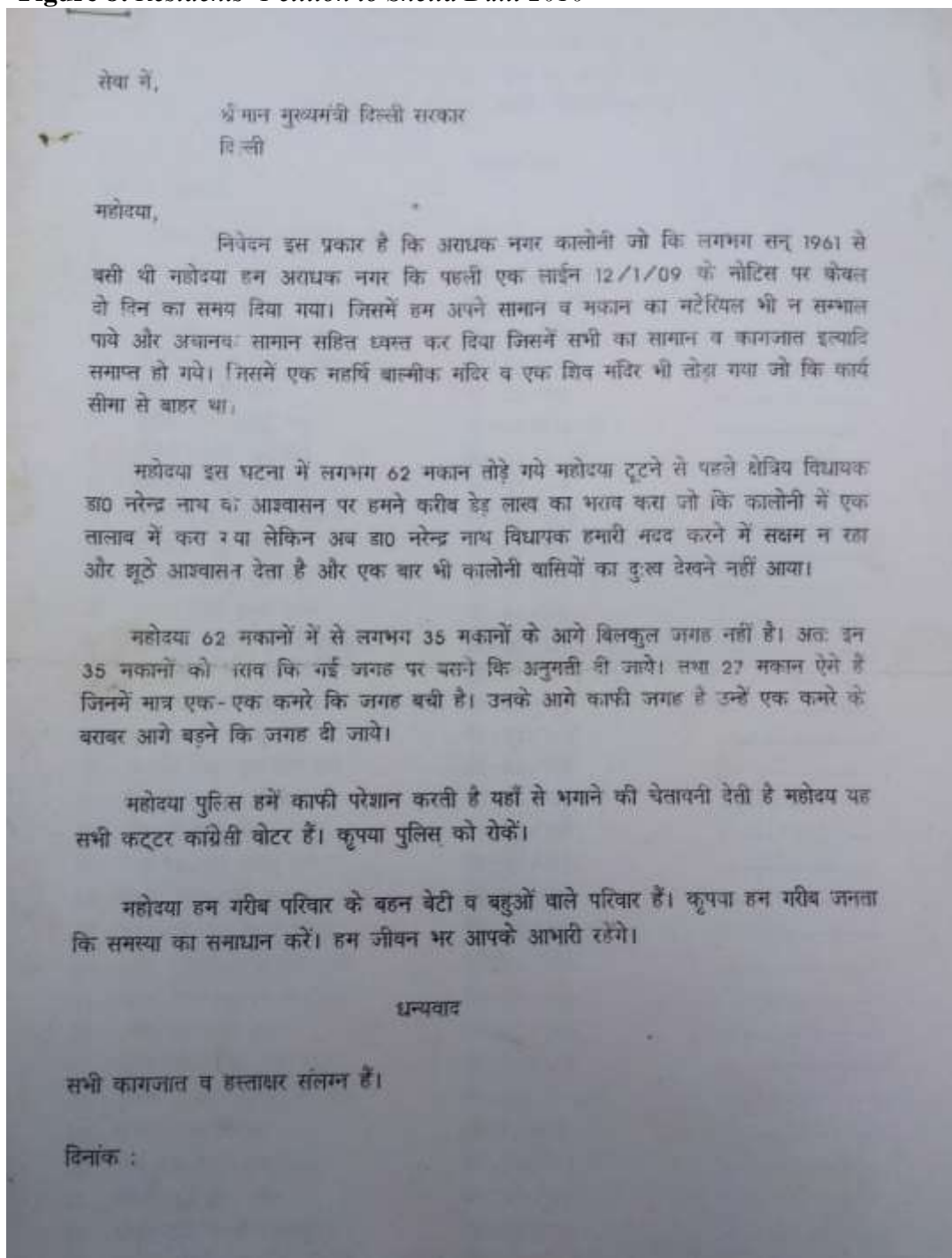
APPENDICES

Appendix A

Copy of Aradhaknagar Residents' Petition to Sheila Dixit

(*Submitted to Delhi CM Office, 2010*)

Figure 8: *Residents' Petition to Sheila Dixit 2010*

सेवा में,

श्रीमान मुख्यमंत्री दिल्ली सरकार
दिल्ली

महोदया,

निवेदन इस प्रकार है कि अराधक नगर कालोनी जो कि लगभग सन् 1961 से बसी थी महोदया हम अराधक नगर कि पहली एक लाईन 12/1/09 के नोटिस पर केवल दो दिन का समय दिया गया। जिसमें हम अपने सामान व मकान का मटेरियल भी न सम्भाल पाये और अचानक सामान सहित ध्वस्त कर दिया जिसमें सभी का सामान व कागजात इत्यादि समाप्त हो गये। जिसमें एक महर्षि बाल्मीक मंदिर व एक शिव मंदिर भी तोड़ा गया जो कि कार्य सीमा से बाहर था।

महोदया इस घटना में लगभग 62 मकान तोड़े गये महोदया टूटने से पहले क्षेत्रिय विधायक डा0 नरेन्द्र नाथ के आश्वासन पर हमने करीब डेढ़ लाख का भराव करा जो कि कालोनी में एक तालाब में करा रहा लेकिन अब डा0 नरेन्द्र नाथ विधायक हमारी मदद करने में सक्षम न रहा और झूठे आश्वासन देता है और एक बार भी कालोनी वासियों का दुःख देखने नहीं आया।

महोदया 62 मकानों में से लगभग 35 मकानों के आगे बिलकुल जगह नहीं है। अतः इन 35 मकानों को राव कि नई जगह पर बसने कि अनुमति दी जाये। तथा 27 मकान ऐसे है जिनमें मात्र एक-एक कमरे कि जगह बची है। उनके आगे काफी जगह है उन्हें एक कमरे के बराबर आगे बड़ने कि जगह दी जाये।

महोदया पुलिस हमें काफी परेशान करती है यहाँ से भगाने की चेतावनी देती है महोदय यह सभी कट्टर कांग्रेसी वोटर हैं। कृपया पुलिस को रोकें।

महोदया हम गरीब परिवार के बहन बेटी व बहुओं वाले परिवार हैं। कृपया हम गरीब जनता कि समस्या का समाधान करें। हम जीवन भर आपके आभारी रहेंगे।

धन्यवाद

सभी कागजात व हस्ताक्षर संलग्न हैं।

दिनांक :

Appendix B

Copy of Aradhaknagar Demolition Notice

(*Issued by Delhi Government's PWD, 2009*)

Figure 9: *PWD demolition notice 2009*
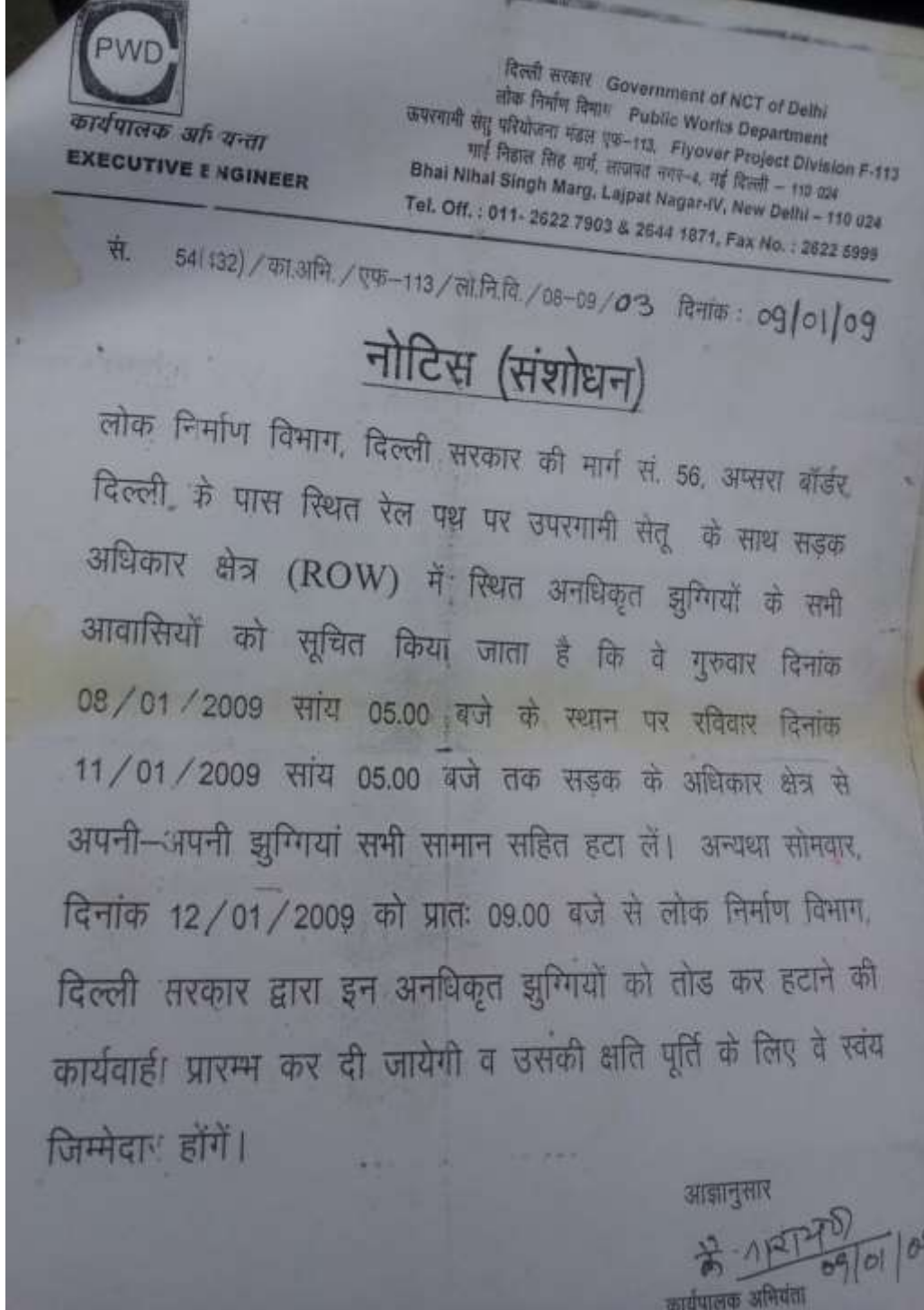
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