

JAMUNA KHADAR: LIVES OF INHABITANTS

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The Yamuna River in Delhi flows over a 22km stretch of land, twisting and turning for centuries and forming a river bank wherever it goes. The land which is next to any river is called the 'Khadar' region implying agriculturally fertile land. The Yamuna Khadar is a vast expanse of land covering an area of approximately 22,000 bheega.

The NH-24 that divides the Jamuna Khadar from the residential neighbourhoods of East Delhi shows a clear spatial distinction. On one side of the road is the residential colonies of Mayur Vihar and on the other side of the highway are the fields. It falls right between the Mayur Vihar phase 1 and Mayur Vihar extension metro stations.

The stretch of land which is parallel to the road begins when one steps down 20 meters from the ground level of the roads. The Khadar region is contained within and circled by roads on all four sides. From this side of the road one could see the other side of Delhi. One can see the lotus temple, Humayun's Tomb and clusters of buildings around Ashram. The Nizamuddin pull and the ITO Bridge create a distinction between the rest of Delhi and the 'Jamuna Paar' (literally Yamuna cross-over, or the other side of Yamuna) regions.

Over the past few years, the Yamuna Khadar has been shrinking in size because of the various projects built over it. These include the Akshardham temple, the Commonwealth Games Village, the BRT bus depot, the Yamuna Biodiversity Park and various industries in the Indraprastha belt. When one is travelling in the Delhi metro, one can see all these projects lined up while progressing from one metro station to another.

PILOT STUDY

The first two days in the field were guided by our ideas about "urban agriculture". We were trying to find the 'urban' aspect in the landscape of Jamuna Khadar. What elevated us further about urban agriculture was not just the aspect of growing vegetables that travelled and catered to all the 'mandis' in and around the national capital region- but also that these people migrated all the way from UP & Bihar to Delhi in order to find and make a livelihood.

This form of migration also captured our attention because the migration was not just to a metropolitan city. The migration was to a metropolitan city to participate in agriculture.

It seemed like an impossible task to understand heavy concepts of 'urban' and 'agriculture' put side by side along with the trends of migration. Every day we were challenged by the heterogeneity in the people's occupations (even though largely there were farmers), their lived experiences and their relationship with the mafia and the state.

To conduct a field study on "urban agriculture" over three weeks and reduce a landscape of 20,000 'bheega'(a measurement unit), where, over 4,000 people lived, and narrow down all data by interacting with 30-40 people did not just seem far-fetched but also highly misleading.

In our initial days at the field we found out that the basis on which these farmers rent the patch of land on which they grew crops, was not easy to find out. Not only were the rents non-standardized, but those who gave the land on rent could not be easily identified as they lived in various parts of the city from Chilla gaaon in the east to nangli gaaon, near Dhaula Kuan on the west. The space of Khadar was inhabited by people physically present there. These were the people we further wished to interact with. The people who owned or seemed to own the land, were physically not present in the field i.e. the state and the mafia.

As per our informants, the land itself is divided between three states- UP government, Punjab government and Delhi government. To trace which government owned which piece of land was a task for which we weren't equipped in those three weeks.

Moreover, the farmers did not have any formally and legally bonded contract or paperwork which could trace when they paid money and for how long they have been on this land. This was an important aspect, as most farmers who have been living in Yamuna Khadar for over 30 year have shifted from one patch of land to another. So to research this along with all other aspects also was a difficult task.

Another problem that revealed itself to us in the initial days of our field work was that to understand urban agriculture one needs to have a good idea about the market prices of the vegetables, fertilizers, pesticides-insecticides, diesel (for the irrigation pump) and every other means of production that facilitates the farmers to grow crops. We could not carry out this extensive research in the given span of time.

The market is not just restricted to the big mandis such as Ghazipur, Azadpur. Even smaller neighbourhoods around east delhi, their markets and weekly bazaars (such as Monday market in Mayur Vihar and Sunday market in Vasundhara Enclave) sold out the vegetables produced at Jamuna Khadar. Prices of vegetables were determined in the Jamuna Khadar when 'graahak' (literally customer, here middlemen) came to Jamuna Khadar and purchased vegetables in wholesale prices. At the same time, many farmers and non-farmers went to the Mandi themselves to sell the vegetables. Therefore, every morning prices got determined in a two-way manner- by the farmers 'going-to' the market and/or the market 'coming-to' the farmers.

By focusing on urban agriculture and the migrants in Jamuna Khadar where majority of them were farmers, one can see how a landscape is reduced to farmers and farming. However, a lot of second and third generation farmers are seeking employment apart from farming such as cab driving, rickshaw and e-rickshaw driving, daily wage labour on others' farms and daily wage labour on construction sites. Few of the people we interacted with were trying to educate themselves and get a job, or at least hope to complete 10th or 12th grade to find jobs. A lot of people own shops in the Khadar region, supply vegetables in 'redi/thela' (carts) without having grown them. These people buy various vegetables in wholesale prices and sell the vegetable in fragments- 1 paav, ½ kilo, 1 kilo, thus making huge profit margin.

A few farmers divide their tasks as well. Some are engaged, say the parents, in farming while their children get educated, start stitching, take tuitions, work on daily wage basis or simply take care of the 'jhuggis'- by cooking, cleaning and watching over cattle.

It therefore seemed unfair to reduce the landscape into a homogenous group of people participating in agriculture – as a sufficient number of them are also participating in alternate occupations, and if not that, the family as a complete unit is not equally contributing and participating in agriculture.

Thus after 3 days of a pilot study of Yamuna Khadar, we realized that urban agriculture is a vast and immensely diverse topic for study which could not be spread over just 2 to 3 weeks. We thus shifted our purpose from urban agriculture to looking at the lived experience at the Khadar region where agriculture was a part of the landscape and the people's lives. At the same time the 'lived experience' reflected the triangular relationship between the inhabitants, the mafia (or renters of land- Jats and Gujjars outside Jamuna Khadar) and the state and its actors.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The enthralling reason that drove us to our research was to understand the people of Yamuna Khadar by understanding the space they occupy in a twofold process, first understanding lived experience through various aspects of space and second, the triangular relationship leading to constant struggle for the space. The triangular relationship between the inhabitants, the mafia and the state shapes the 'lived experience' of the people of the Jamuna Khadar. 'Space as lived' is interwoven and created in interactions with those who occupy the 'Space as owned'. In the following study we see how the creation of the houses, the roads, the aspirations, the jobs and the identity are all intertwined with the state's schemes and interferences and the interdependent and estranged relationship with the rest of the city or the "andar". The Mafia as well determines the livelihood of these farmers in terms of providing illegal electricity supply, water facilities, agricultural land on rent. The mafia consists of none other than the rich and powerful Jats and Gujjars of 'Chilla Gaon' and 'Nangli Gaon' who have taken the land of Khadar expanse on lease from the government. Thus, we see a convoluted relationship between the three actors where the Khadar inhabitants who make the area a living space are constantly made to interact with actors who own this space that is the Mafia people and the government contributing to the inhabitants' "lived experience".

- **LIVED EXPERIENCE THROUGH VARIOUS ASPECTS**

- a) **EVERYDAY-NESS OF THE SPACE:** The activities of the everyday reflect on the living in the space of the Khadar region. By understanding the very small details of how the household is organized, what the demarcations are between the inside and the outside space and how the various activities of cleaning and bathing are carried out within that space, we will articulate the fashioning of the space and how this fashioning is pertinent to the 'lived experience' of everyday. 'Lived experience' is not an independent variable, it doesn't function in a vacuum, the vacuum being Jamuna Khadar. It is constantly controlled by the mafia who are situated outside the Khadar but regulate the living of the people. The state's presence is not felt explicitly however it is very much present in the living of the people in a quiet and subtle way.

- b) **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 'JUNGLE' AND 'ANDAR':** The study of the space occupied by the Yamuna Khadar inhabitants is imperative because it does not only occupy geographically distinct spaces from the spaces around it but also stimulates a cultural and distinctively constructed setting from the rest of the city. Thus, in our report, we would throw light on the ambiguous relationship between 'Andar' and 'Jungle' in the context of geographical and cultural spatial distinction as made by the inhabitants of Yamuna Khadar region. 'Andar' and 'jungle', terms given by the Khadar people themselves, is part of their vocabulary which they use to distinguish themselves from the rest of the city. 'Andar' signifies the city on the opposite side of the road, the police, the mafia and the customers. 'Jungle' signifies the Jamuna Khadar and the people of Jamuna Khadar.

- c) **EPHEMERAL TO PERENNIAL:** The space occupied by the UP-Bihar migrants is under constant threat of displacement by the government but still there is much to the place than seen through a cursory glance. It is obviously the work and the profit which has brought so many people come together to live in the Yamuna Khadar area but the ephemeral space of work and profit has

been transmuted to a perennial space of hope and aspirations. This struggle of ephemeral to perennial is what caught our attention. This analytical category of the ephemeral and perennial are flowing across our observations and findings.

The impermanence and the ephemeral space is created through constant insecurity of being displaced from the area and with that comes the simultaneous and constant threat of being penurious, homeless and unemployed. In the endless struggle for the space, the inhabitants of Yamuna Khadar find a sense of home, a sense of place.

The permanence or the perennial space is evidently constructed by naturalisation of spaces and the naturalisation of senses of spaces. The space becomes naturalised in terms of different interpretation of senses of the space. Naturalised senses over here mean certain sounds or certain things one perceives as natural to that particular space.

- **THE TRIANGULAR RELATIONSHIP:** the life of the people who live on Yamuna Khadar and who directly don't own that land, but are stuck in the age-old tug-of-war between the state and the mafia is the triangular relationship. We have tried to substantiate an understanding of these relations through the data we collected in the limited amount of time. In each experience expressed in the research study, the triangular relationship operates. This category is not in vacuum but is constructed and manifested in the smallest details of the lives of the inhabitants. **So space as lived and space as owned are in constant interaction with one another.** And the power of the state interferes and governs the lives of these farmers. **Space then manifests the power dynamics between the three parties.**

METHODOLOGY

The main tool of conducting this field research was in-depth interviews. During the first 4-5 days the interviews were restricted to an organized set of questionnaires in Hindi. After a point we let the conversations flow on their own without directing

them. Since our method of analyses was qualitative, interviews provided a lot of space to move here and there, stumbling upon stories. In many instances, right from day one, we were not asking questions but we were answering questions that our informants asked us. This self-reflective method helped us form a good rapport with our informants and opened up key areas of their lives that were blanketed away from us. We did not want to impose our understanding of the field on the people of the Khadar region rather we wanted them to construct the field for us.

Another method we used was the focus group method. This method enables the researcher to engage in in-depth conversations with a group of informants. On the first day, we were apprehensive about interacting with male informants as we were female researchers. On the first day itself we were called by a big group of farmers when we were passing by. There was only one woman sitting and the rest were men. In a group, it became easier to interact with the inhabitants. They wanted us to ask them questions the way we had asked their neighbors.

We realized that by creating a focus group, we could facilitate discussions amongst them. Their cross questioning towards each other's responses illustrated the differences in their ideas. For example, when we asked a cab driver in the field about his caste and how stringent caste rules were back at his village, his closest friend was not aware about these never-discussed items. They in turn started conversing with each other about how caste functioned in each of their villages.

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

Lived experience of the inhabitants: everyday-ness of life

The trail we followed from the main road opened up many 'kachcha raastas'. Almost each new trail led to a new collectivity of 'jhuggis'. A jhuggi is a house like unit with ceilings and walls made up of hay and floor slathered with clay and cow dung. It is enclosed from all sides, with a door as the entrance point. When we

started walking we observed that each cluster of 'jhuggi' was occupied by members of the same family- close and extended. Most families had different kitchens, signifying different households. Each 'jhuggi' had a 'Chulha' or cooking area, symbolizing its kitchen. The common space shared by all the jhuggis, mostly formed a courtyard- 'Aangan'. Here bikes, cycles, thelas, buffalo-carts were parked. These Angaan had a jute cot or 'khatiyaa' where the children were playing, sleeping or doing their home works. The 'khatiyaa' occupied a space where interactions were initiated and gossips were exchanged.

The way they organized various objects inside the 'jhuggi' was interesting and peculiar. While sitting at an informant called Ruby's house, we saw that all the materials of everyday use like the comb, talcum powder, the clips and the pins and rubber bands were clasped to the hay of the jhuggi on the side walls. The side walls made up of hay were used as shelves to keep the everyday things. This pattern of keeping every day-use items on the wall made up of hay seemed to be a common pattern in many other jhuggis.

Utensils and clothes were most the visible material objects common to all households. In most houses there were no tables, few chairs (mainly khatiya) kept in the aangan. In houses where there were television sets, there was table on which it was placed. In some jhuggis there were beds. Dish TVs were visible at frequent distances placed in the Aangan of the jhuggis. The inside of the houses were dirt-free and nicely arranged. In Ruby's house, clothes were neatly stashed inside aluminium trunks. Utensils in another informant called Chanchal's house, were neatly arranged in Mother Dairy crates. They were hung from the ceiling. Most things in the house were not kept on the floor rather they were tied up to the ceiling.

From this we realized that the inside of each jhuggi was fashioned uniquely. Each jhuggi may look similar from the outside in structure but was highly distinct from the other. Not just this, the space reflected ephemeral aspect of the inhabitants' life. The fact that they didn't keep bulky and many wooden furnitures and kept everything in boxes is probably not because they chose to fashion their house that way. The fear of floods and being bulldozed over as told by many informants shaped the kind of materials they kept in the house and the way they built their houses. When we asked one of our informants called Pooja about her cement and bricks made house, she said that the state's bulldozers came immediately and

refused other farmers to build houses of permanent materials. Materials of the jhuggi show the state's quiet impositions in the people's everyday life.

Largely, the space in and around the jhuggi was organized. Even the place of bathing was built into some jhuggis and assigned a corner. The toilet however was not a part of the space of the jhuggi. The people of jungle defecated in the open. In the morning time, everyone went to different places around the fields. On one hand, in and around the jhuggi, we noticed organization and demarcation of spaces but on the other hand, something that demands a personalized space was in fact not demarcated and didn't come under the defined spaces that were in and around the jhuggi.

The state can provide the Khadar inhabitants with sewage system, taps and constructed bathroom toilets, but it was not the case. It is important to reflect why? Why doesn't the state want to give any permanence to the people in the Khadar area?

The parts of Jamuna Khadar that we explored, we saw a few small shops interspersed between the jhuggis. The shops were also places of social interaction. The shops looked like any other jhuggi and were made of the same materials. Products like pulses, rice, and oil were sold alongside sachets of shampoo, oil, soap etc. The shops even offered 'naashta' (literally breakfast, here fried items) packets, chips, biscuits and cold drinks. Chips like 'fun-flips' which are not the high-end companies are extremely popular. 'Uncle chips' and 'Lays' packets were few in number and only 5/- packets were available. Biscuits were kept in glass jars. There were no bottled shampoos like they were available in the city. We remember the cola drinks and the lime drinks which were available long time before in cities but here in the Yamuna Khadar area are still immensely popular.

A peculiar thing to observe in these shops was the miniature versions of all goods like soap, oil, shampoo, chips- sold between 5 and 20 rupees. Even items like rice and dal were sold in open packets in small quantities. Moreover, shops varied in size, and shopkeepers also reflected different backgrounds. In the case of one informant called Rana, running a shop was one of his main sources of income. On the other hand, Chanchal's father was running a shop as a spare time activity. They already had big fields; their children had begun working and earning in the 'sheher' (city). They even offered choices in products, and were extremely proud about this.

These shops were quite a necessary aspect of the Yamuna Khadar. The people no longer had to go to the main city for every tiny purchase. These were some of the constant efforts of transferring the ephemeral space into perennial space. By bringing the products of every day to day use to the Khadar region rather than going to the city itself meant that 'lived experience' of the people was becoming more and more wholesome and fulfilling.

'Chaapakal' or the hand pump is the source which provided underground water to the jhuggis. The underground water through the hand pump was used for multiple purposes like washing clothes and utensils. The hand pump area was covered with a ragged piece of cloth or jute which created a blanketed space for women of the house to take their bath. The space occupied by the hand pump was used for multiple purposes as mentioned before. At one point of the day, the hand pump area was used to wash utensils and at another point of the day, it used to become a bathroom space. The multiplicity of functions of the hand pump area expresses how the inhabitants of the Yamuna Khadar area use the restricted given singular space for multiple reasons. The hand pump did not only denote usage by an individual family unit. It was also shared with people of other jhuggis. A big part of our fieldwork revolved around an extended family from Badaiyun. Here we saw that a cluster of 7-8 households shared one hand pump and one irrigation pump located side by side. On the other hand, in Chanchal's house, one hand pump was used by 4 members of the family and it was incorporated within the jhuggi space. It wasn't arbitrarily placed in the open. In some cases, the hand pump as a site can be looked at as the extension of the household. Thus we deduced from the above observation that a hand pump is individualized in the case of certain jhuggis, and shared in certain other cases by people belonging to different families. The space that the hand pump occupies is not only restricted to inside space of one jhuggi but is shared by multiplicity of jhuggis.

Moreover one can also see how the location of the hand pump reflects the status of the household. When Reshma's mother was washing clothes and her sister brought us water to drink, both the waters came from outside the jhuggi. Drinking water came from the Delhi Jal Board tank and the washing-water came from a shared hand pump, far away from their jhuggi. This implied that although hand pumps were a common sight in the Yamuna Khadar area, there were few

households where hand pump was indeed a privilege, a luxury making availability of water a privilege itself.

Even though we only saw hand pumps as a source of water, we found it hard to believe that people would not want the comfort of water taps. Here also we wondered if the state consciously put in efforts to ensure that the inhabitants don't make the space permanent by getting water pipeline connections.

Thus we saw that hand pumps were used for household and other small varied purposes, contributing to the multifarious 'lived experience' of the inhabitants.

Another important source of water was motor pump. Here, collective life was very evidently visible. The primary function of the motor pump was to irrigate the cultivated lands. However, everyday whenever the motor would run, children and mothers carrying their infants from various places would come and bathe their children. Clothes were also washed here. Some farmers cleaned their vegetables alongside these pits. The motor pump water generated a shallow pit around it, and this pit was used by the children to dive in. In some places, a concrete pit was created for the same purpose. These motor pumps reflected the multiplicity of activities that were arranged around it. Diesel in the pump was paid for, to generate water, for irrigating fields. In the process of irrigating fields, other activities were also fulfilled.

There were various sources of electricity in Jamuna Khadar. The mafia stole electricity from the electricity poles on the main road, and channelized it into the Khadar region.

Access to electricity depended upon the distance of jhuggis from the main road. The closer the jhuggis were from the main road, easier it was to get electricity and the farther the homes were from the main road, tougher it got to access electricity. As a result as we started moving farther and farther away from the city, in the jungle, the jhuggis had no electricity from these poles.

The price of electricity-supply varied from 250-400 rupees, depending upon who the provider was. Apart from the mafia, one house in the Khadar region where we interacted with a little girl called Swati, mentioned that her family supplied electricity to the Khadar region. The access to electricity did not only depend on the distance from the main road but also affordability. In every house we saw that people had home-made lantern made up of plastic bottles with kerosene filled

inside. Another way the people got electricity was by installing solar panels. The smallest panels cost 5,000 rupees. The solar panels were a onetime investment. The various modes of gathering electricity worked alternatively. Not many relied on only one source. The heterogeneity in the 'lived experience' reflected in symbols such as the hand pump, water and electricity helped us understand that each life world in the Khadar region was in stark contrast with its neighbor.

The electricity was provided to inhabitants of the Khadar, but this electricity is stolen. It is illegal. The mafia at each instance, it seemed to us, did provide equipments for the convenience of the inhabitants' lives. However, we observed that only 'bare-minimum' facilities were being provided for the survival of the people. Concrete and permanent structural changes were hardly being made. The fact that Jamuna Khadar despite being a vast expanse had no 'pucca' road was not a mere lack of need or demand. The government did not construct roads because they treat the inhabitants as temporary.

Lived experience: Naturalization of senses

Certain senses of the place are so naturalized in the jungle area, that the people of the jungle associate these sounds and visions with their lived experience. As soon as one starts walking from the main road into the fields, following the already made trails, one can feel the change in the air. On a hot and moist summer afternoon, the fields emanate a sense of wetness. This is mixed with the cool breeze that hits the body. The sound of the road- the honking of cars, the sound of the metro beeping on arrival, and the general city rush are the sounds that one starts leaving behind. The first 'jhuggi' we crossed was Neelam's. When at her 'jhuggi' we paused to drink water under the shade of trees and turned behind, the flow of traffic was only a visual, and not audible anymore.

The sound of old regional music which emanated out of 'Surahi' (speakers) was constantly audible in the Khadar. The music was so naturalised to the place that no one sat and listened to it, everyone passed by. The music was almost quotidian to the place. The sound of motor pump is another very apparent and noticeable sound. The sound of running of motor pumps immediately symbolized that agricultural land was being irrigated and most probably children were taking dips and women were washing and batting clothes. The sound of cows and buffaloes mooing were another very distinct sound that was common to the Aangan area

where generally cows and Buffaloes are tied. To the people, sounds of cows and buffaloes mooing and goats bleating are as naturalised to the place as the sound of traffic is to the city people. Another source of naturalised senses which gave the jungle people a sense of home, probably a sense of village was the cycle riders on which a loudspeaker was attached and some kind of advertisement was being announced. These cycle riders are an important source of information to jungle people where sources of awareness and knowledge are relatively less from the city.

Naturalization of sound is also accompanied by naturalization of vision. Khadar as a landscape is covered with crops that are seasonal in nature. Crops are usually short in height, apart from lady's finger that was relatively taller in height. The living space fashioned with jute cots, hand pumps, hay jhuggis, small shops, bullocks and cows, motor pumps. Everything is constructed in the place but becomes so naturalized that the inhabitants of Yamuna Khadar associate these fashioned materials as apparent and obvious. There are innumerable birds at the Khadar region, chirping on trees which add to the naturalization of senses and sound.

In the jungle area, children do not have any organized place for play. They keep on wandering around on the narrow trails between jhuggis. The inside space is significant as it gives a sense of shelter, a sense of security but the outside space is more widely used. Children stay outside the houses most of the time. Thus the sight and noises of children playing with each other, shouting out each others' name is also much naturalized to the jungle area. For instance, on one day when we were hanging around Rana's shop, we saw two children playing bat and ball between two jhuggis. The bat was made of cardboard while the ball was a brinjal. They eventually started playing a game where they ran around each other and hit each other with the same brinjal. This was quite a sight which added to the senses of vision unique to Yamuna Khadar region. Most children in the Khadar region play in the mud all the time. Mud which could symbolize dirt is not dealt with the same way in the Khadar region as it is in the city. It is seen as dirt. Here, mud is seen as an extension of the 'play' and children lavishly roll in it.

The city life is right adjacent to their life and their world but the sounds of traffic, honking cars, motorcycle sounds are not naturalised in their senses. They are aware of these sounds, they hear them all the time when they go to the city for work and other activities but from the jungle area, these sounds are not audible and thus are not imprinted in their everyday lives. We saw that children playing, birds chirping,

cows moo-ing, goats bleating is so unmistakably recognizable in terms of vision and sound that it is most distinguishable at the same time most prosaic characteristic naturalizing the senses of the people living in the Yamuna Khadar region.

These naturalization of senses, naturalizes the place as well helps us apprehend the lived experience of the inhabitants. The senses then are no more outside, exterior to the everyday living of the Khadar people; they become an intrinsic, un-detachable characteristic of the place they occupy. The relationship of these senses to the people and to the everyday activities of their lives helps us understand how place is always emanating a feeling of collectivity by 'relation of sensation'.

The naturalization of senses may seem like a choice but perhaps it is not a choice rather imposed by the state and the mafia subtly. It is easy to look at a space as an outsider and romanticize the way it looks. Kachcha raasta and handpumps might be a reminder of what Delhi is not about, a reflection of a non-urban space. However, beneath the layers of the materials in the Khadar area, one can see the constant denial of the facilities of drinking water, tap water, pucca roads which facilitates the movement of the people, lamps on roads and electricity in general. When we saw unaccountable spaces such as the farmhouses and big mansions, we were told that parties took place here once a month and people in big cars and dancer girls visited these bungalows. The existence of the bungalows might be naturalized to the everyday vision of the inhabitants. However, there is a parallel sense of that space being a symbol of the mafia's. The land was not a farming land. It was a property of the mafia for their personal use. There is a sense of 'us' and them' that is generated amongst the farmers though these structures.

Continuity and Discontinuity of lived experience between the native village and the Yamuna Khadar expanse

When one steps into Jamuna Khadar region and is exposed to the landscape one feels that there has been a shift, almost a break from the city. Instead of buildings, roads, motorized vehicles and overcrowding, the land till the horizon is covered with fields, crops and sprinkled with sprawling trees. When we entered Jamuna Khadar, we felt like we had been transported to a place far away from the capital city, into some rural part of India. Let us see in the following arguments that do the inhabitants of Yamuna Khadar see the Khadar space as replicating and recreating the idea of village? Is there absolute continuity or is there some form of

discontinuity as well between their villages in UP-Bihar and vast expanse of Yamuna Khadar area in Delhi? Also is this continuity or discontinuity a choice or an imposition by the state and the mafia?

According to the views of the people in Jamuna Khadar, a village is signified by caste groups in a hierarchical setting. Many informants constantly pointed out that village gave a lot of significance to social life revolving around caste distinction. However, in Jamuna Khadar, a feeling and a sense of a village life is constantly cultivated, experienced and recreated in a strange new way. This is so because unlike the village, the various jhuggis and clusters of jhuggis in the Khadar area did not give importance to caste composition. The life here revolved around the struggle to make a living. There is multiplicity of caste composition but it doesn't become a defining factor in their every day to day life. In fact the jhuggis are arranged simply on the basis of belonging to one's extended family.

Conclusively, the re-imagined space in Jamuna Khadar which borrows a lot from the village structure does not reflect and form bonds based on caste. There is continuity between the native village and the Khadar expanse but there is also emerging discontinuities between the two spaces.

There are contrary opinions to whether the life of 'jungle' replaces the life of the village. Some say that it is just the need for money that brings people to the city and if given a favourable environment they would rather live in the village than here with constant fear of displacement. The lack of favourable market conditions in their own village has forced them to take residence in city. Lal Babu's wife Gudiya said that city is friendlier to their family. The fact that Lal Babu's family comes under the harijan caste (lowest in the caste order), they feel more emancipated in the city, as compared to the oppressive rules and regulations that were predominant in the village. As a woman, Gudiya told us, she had to use 'Pallu' all the time. She even had to restrain her movement to the bedroom or mainly the kitchen. She said that over here in the city, she could sit in the open, watch television. This however was not the case for Neelam as she had to follow the same norms of gendered space in her jhuggi in Delhi as she operated under them in Badaiyun. Thus, there were variations in the manner in which people experienced the city as compared to their native place.

The idea of a village that is created in the Khadar region perhaps is not out of choice. Maybe the inhabitants did not choose to build houses of clay and hay, but made because of their constant displacement from the land forced them to adapt to these earthy materials.

For some, the conditions away from the village were favourable. While for others, they were more or less the same and there was continuity to their lived experiences of the native village. When we asked one informant as to what he felt in the city viz-a-viz their village, he said that the UP government didn't care about the basic facilities of the public such as electricity and water. The electricity cut was higher in the village as compared to Delhi. Even the quality of water in Delhi was better, according to them, in Jamuna Khadar. Water and electricity were the two factors which facilitated their activity of growing crops, and thus, Delhi was definitely a better alternative according to most of them. Apart from water and electricity, the cost of diesel per month and the price of vegetables in the markets was an imperative for their shift from rural UP and Bihar to Urban Delhi.

Therefore, opinions and preferences that ranged from villages in UP and Bihar to Jamuna Khadar in Delhi, occupied a wide gamut. It varied from intangible and immaterial social factors such as caste structure and gender based norms to material factors such as favourable conditions to crop varied greatly. Certain people found comfort in the city, whereas certain other people despite the comfort were keen on returning back home.

Lived experience: the relationship between Andar and Jungle

The Jamuna Khadar inhabitants' relationship with the city is an estranged one in many ways. However, it is also a relationship of interdependence where the 'andar' gets its conveniences from the 'jungle', and the people of the 'jungle' depend on the 'andar'.

In a way, inhabitants of Yamuna Khadar region had created a space of convenience and contentment where they had the basic amenities to have a 'lived experience'. However, the Andar or the city has a paramount role to play in catering to the 'lived experience' of the people of Jungle. They associate themselves to the city but in a

peculiar. The relationship to Delhi which they call 'Andar' is an estranged one but at the same time it provides the Yamuna Khadar people with arrangements and facilities that are not available to them in their settlement in the Yamuna Khadar region. Their association with the city is primarily concerned with their work and profit. All the huge water pipes, motor machines, pesticides are to be bought from the city. The market for their vegetables they grow is the whole of Mayur Vihar region.

However, they do interact with the city in different ways besides just work and profit purpose. Almost all the children go to government schools in the Mayur Vihar region. Sohila, one of the informants told us that they go to beauty parlour in Mayur Vihar. For the delivery of the child or for any kind of medical assistance, the Yamuna Khadar people go to hospital which is in the city. There is no clinic or doctors within Yamuna Khadar region. Many women of the houses go to the city for domestic help in middle class houses.

Ergo we noticed a two sided relationship between the 'jungle' and the 'andar'. The jungle provides the city people with the vegetables and the Andar provides the Khadar people will all the facilities. An informant commented that "Yahaan se hum chale Gaye to tumhaari sabziyaan itni mehengi milengi" (if we leave this place your vegetable would become extremely costly), making us realize that the farmers invisibility in the city even after their worthwhile contribution to the balanced market prices of the city vegetable.

The relationship between the city and the Yamuna Khadar region is estranged because of their conflicting interest.

First, the Yamuna Khadar people feel that the state is conspiring against them to displace them and make them homeless. An informant mentioned to us that "jab bulldozer ayega toh Sab Khatam ho Jayega, sirf Bachchey ko backhane ka sochenge." (When the bulldozers finally come and destroy our homes, everything would finish. We will save our children, forget ur homes and belongings, and leave). Second, the people of Yamuna Khadar region believe in a stark difference between the city people and themselves. One of the women was talking about the cornucopia of riches of the city life. When asked how she knows about it, she said she knows everything through TV. Television is not common in every jhuggi but children and seldom bahu of the house come together to watch television channels at a relative's or a neighbors' jhuggis.

Third, the stream of heavy traffic with flowing trucks, Lorries, cars and bikes on the "pakka road" creates a tangible and real boundary between the two spaces, the two worlds. The Yamuna Khadar people feel really alienated from the ruckus and the chaos of the city life symbolised by the road, which is most evidently visible from the Yamuna Khadar region.

Fourth, the huge blocks of buildings and bridges and the grand structure of the metro line makes some of them feel divorced from the lives of 'they'. This could be because they themselves did not own houses in the city.

Fifth, the Yamuna Khadar area is very skeptical of the city streets and city life, insecured of how it could cause harm to them. Once Sohila told us that she was walking on the street of Mayur Vihar and she was eve teased by some men. Another woman mentioned us how children go wandering by on the streets and go missing.

One thing that is very clear is that the relationship between the 'jungle' and 'andar' cannot be very conspicuously stated. It cannot be explained by simple conjecture that the state wants the people of jungle to be removed. There are a lot of certitude and dubiety in the way the two parties interact with each other. During monsoon the government purposely opens the dam that causes inundation of water all over the Yamuna bank, ruining all the material objects, destroying the jhuggis and causing thousands of people of this area to be forced to settle on the sidewalks of the main road. One of the instances mentioned by our informant says that during the common wealth game, the government purposely ungated the dams so that the thousands of people would be forced to leave the Yamuna Khadar bank, their jhuggis would be destroyed and consequently there would not be trace of any settlement in the Yamuna Khadar area visible from the main road. Some other residence of the village said that the government did not want to wreck the aesthetic of the capital city by vision of rows of jhuggis, farmlands and settlement of thousands of people who do not contribute to the aesthetics of the city life. The government also does not allow them to construct 'pakka Makkan'(concrete building) as the government does not want to make their residence permanent. The Mafia, though supports the inhabitants at times but in many cases the mafia becomes helpless and cannot really save the 'khadar' land from destruction.

However, on the other hand, government does provide ration card, Aadhar card and other ID cards to them. The government provides recognition to the impermanent jhuggis and living space. Once we were sitting at Ramkalis house, when two policemen walked in and sat on the Khatiya. All the men and women

sitting around us seemed to know the policemen which mean that the policemen come there often. The policemen wanted to register phone numbers and photos of kids in that area. When we asked why is that so, they said the government wants to keep a tab, keep a check on the children as many of them get lost or are probably abducted from the main road. What do we extrapolate out of these instances? We see how the state does not provide complete legitimacy and recognition to the people of Yamuna Khadar area but at the same time the state is also not blinded towards the needs of the jungle people. The state regulates the jungle people by constantly meeting certain basic needs. One of the informants told us that “the state is not ready to provide 'proper citizenship' but at the same time provides provisions for them so that thousands of these farmers do not rise against the state in protest”.

The Triangular relationship: the Khadar inhabitants, the Govt. and the Mafia

When we started interacting with the people in Jamuna Khadar, we always asked them about how much land they cultivated and who gave them this land to cultivate. We got to know that the estimate annual amount per Bheega was between 8-10,000/-. In the first few days we were curious to understand the farmers' relationship with the Mafia. The Mafia consisted of Jat or Gujjar people, who themselves did not live in Jamuna Khadar. They lived in a nearby village called Chilla Gaaon and a far away village in Dhaula Kuan called Nangli Gaaon. Thus the Mafia controlled the rents and ownership of land without living in the space they controlled.

The farmers did not have a strained relationship with Mafia, as it could be assumed. In fact, in many cases, the Mafia helped out the farmers with their problems. For example, Reshma told us that a member of the mafia who owned the land around her house had done good deeds for the people. When the third phase of the metro construction had started off, he resisted the construction of the metros.

For Reshma and other who thought highly of the Mafia person, it was the simple reason that he saved them from the state's destructive power. But on the other hand, the Mafia person had a selfish reason involved in this act. By resisting the force of the state he secured his own earnings.

In Geeta didi's case, there was no payment involved with her Mafia. Instead she simply cultivated fruit and vegetable crops for a couple called Anjali and Ajay who had constructed a farm house. She paid cash in kind. She had another set of link with another land-owner called Vaid ji. This man gave them land to cultivate on as well as land to live on. He even constructed their house and made bathroom and toilets. The relationship of Geeta with her livelihood-providers was not at all strained.

Many people complained of a strained relationship with their Mafia. Some people took not only money from the farmers annually, but they even took home their everyday farm-produce. Sometimes they paid less than the amount that was asked for. The farmer did not complain as he was in mercy of their magnanimity.

The farmers at Badaiyun focus group were highly insecure towards the last few days that we interacted with them. They had been hearing and reading news about the government's bulldozers crashing their homes and fields. Apparently the land which had been given out on lease had finally been paid for by the Mafia. The state was in direct contact with the Mafia, but not the farmers.

The Mafia received money from two sources- the state as well as the farmers. When and if the land is bulldozed over and hijacked by the state, the farmers would suffer a double loss. They would not only lose their homes and source of livelihood, but in addition to this, they would not even get any money back as compensation of destroying their homes.

As mentioned somewhere else, the relationship between the state and the farmers is strained on other accounts too. It is also highly ambiguous. Most of the years, the Yamuna river's water intake is increased and as a result the farm areas are flooded. This leaves the inhabitants of the Khadar region with no choice but to move to the roads and construct make shift huts till the time the water receded back from the fields. For the loss they suffer by losing out their fields for those two months of floods, the government does not make any compensation for their huts, their tube wells, their hand pump and many times their cattle that gets submerged in the water. But when they are on the streets, the government does provide them with basic meals to sustain.

The farmers feel like they don't exist for the government except on the occasion of elections. The last elections after which Aam Aadmi Party came to power, many farmers recalled the way Manish Sisodia came and spent hours talking to the

farmers and discussing their problems. Sisodia even lay down on the roads when the farmers were protesting against the state a few years back. But now that he is in power, the farmers don't understand why he is not returning to them and attending to their needs.

Big projects such as Akshardham temple, Commonwealth Games Village and the third station of the Delhi metro has taken away acres of land from the farmers without any compensation in place of their loss. The government, they all know, indulges in preferential behaviour towards big private companies. This can also be seen over the recent claims made by the National Green Tribunal about the various ways in which the farmers on the Yamuna are polluting the river. The same National Green Tribunal, as a farmer called Omkar said, has no objection the tonnes of litres of industrial waste that is flowing down from the Indraprastha industries and from the sewage lines flowing from all over the city and channelizing its waste into the Yamuna.

Through the various developments and dialogues between the different players such as the state, private companies and the poor inhabitants in Yamuna Khadar, it is clear that there has been a history of preferential treatment against the farmers.

The Mafia being the silent actor, which neither produces in and inhabits the Khadar region nor legally owns the land, seems to get the most privileges in terms of money from the entire setup. The state intervenes whenever there's a profitable project that is proposed by any company. The state also intervenes in the day to day life of the farmers in the form of DDA bulldozers, policemen looking for children and creating a database if they go missing, the various programmes such as Aangan Waadi and Raen Basera for the betterment of the conditions of life of the people of the Khadar region.

The farmers in all this are just the receivers of the game play between the state and the Mafia, who are always trying to extract profit out of any deal.

Education: evolving and emerging in changing spaces

Education as an institution has emerged in a place where the motive of people to migrate and settle was to earn a decent livelihood. In the stories of most of the people we spent time with, their preference to come to Delhi was because of the prospering market. Over the past 20 years, however, Jamuna Khadar has

undergone lots of changes. One of the ways through which this change is reflected is the emphasis people give to education.

Basanti, a mother of two, looks back to the days when she got married and wishes how she could have studied a little more back then. She however wants to educate her children and give them what she never received. In another instance, Rana, crunched by his condition to get treatment for his youngest daughter, Kranti always mentioned how he wants to get his son back into a private school like old days. Rana moved from Himachal Pradesh to Delhi, left his work and his children's education and settled for an average life in the Khadar, just in the hope of accumulating money for the treatment. Another scenario where we see an emerging awareness about education in the Khadar region is how a lady called Geeta, was trying her best by channelizing all her income into her three children's education. Apart from getting guide books and sample question papers from the bazaar, she even arranged for tuitions. Her daughter had already withdrawn from school, as she had failed in the ninth grade examinations. Geeta kept pursuing her even in front of us to continue her school education. Geeta felt that by educating oneself and opting for the right subjects, one could get out of the life burdened by hardships and insecurities. Geeta did not want her children to become farmers like her and her husband under such unfavourable conditions of life.

As researchers we constantly came across stories and instances where the people in the Khadar region were inclining towards education. There was an idea that their children could start choosing jobs and work other than farming. Education started being looked at as a tool to aspire for a life distant from agriculture-related uncertainties and constant threat of insecurity.

During our field research we came across a figure by the name 'Sardarji Lobana'. This man has been coming to Jamuna Khadar since 1993, and after getting to know the locality and its locals, he opened a school for children. He appointed teachers for this school. The first school sprawled under the shade of trees. Children came every morning and studied with 'masterji', a person who has been dedicating all his time for last 13 years into teaching the children of the Khadar. Sardarji Lobana, with the support of the parents of these children constructed a building in 1999 which

was to be the new school. The school as an institution bringing about marked change in the present lives of the people significantly rose in its appeal to the parents of the Khadar region. To see a man such as Sardarji, dedicating all his resources just for the need of the people, changed the way many people looked at education.

It is known that agriculture as a full-time manual activity ropes in the entire household at some part of the work. The children of the Khadar region, till date, work on the fields with their parents, mostly out of compulsion. So, for many children it became a struggle to go against their parents and start attending school. They therefore spent less time contributing in the field work. Vimala was one such girl we met. She was not allowed to attend school. But when she was in 6th grade, in the beginning she sneakily started going to school by telling her parents that she was just going to “wander around” and see what it is like. She started attending classes. With the constant guidance and support of Sardarji, she was able to study efficiently so much so that she topped her class for consecutive three years. Vimala against all odds managed to study, attend school and channelize her energy despite a demotivated environment at home towards her education.

When we walked a little more away from Vimala’s home, we asked for another girl’s address called Reshma. Reshma’s family was the only Muslim family we interacted with in the entire Jamuna Khadar region of Mayur Vihar. Reshma’s father migrated from UP to Delhi with a family of 9 members. He took up the occupation of rickshaw pulling. He wanted to provide Reshma and his three other daughters with education in the city. Despite the poor economic conditions of the family, Reshma managed to go to school. However, what was interesting in Reshma’s case was that she started stitching clothes when she reached 7th grade to support her family and her education. Reshma has 3 elder brothers. Even though two of them earn a living, they don’t contribute it for the household needs. Reshma’s father spends his hard-earned money on alcohol. Her mother and sister Rijwaana work on other people’s lands as daily wage labour. Through everything, Sardarji Lobana has supported Reshma, by encouraging and motivating her to study and work at the same time. Sardarji has become such an integral part of Reshma’s family’s life that he even named their youngest sibling, Arif.

Further ahead of the road, when one keeps walking, just before the road comes to an end and the river starts, there's a girl called Pooja who lives with her two brothers and parents in a brick-house. It is not a house like any other in Jamuna Khadar. It was the first 'pakka makaan' that we saw. Pooja's father migrated from Bihar primarily to educate his daughter. Unlike Reshma's house, Pooja was well to do. Her father's dream was that Pooja should become an IPS officer one day. Pooja, just like Reshma and Vimala studied for the formative years in Sardarji Lobana's school. Sardarji Lobana has been taking care of these three girls along with many others for years. Pooja has finished 12th grade and is now applying to colleges in the University of Delhi. Alongside her studies, she takes tuition for many children in the Khadar region. So she is quite a known person to all the kids we saw on the main road from where we walked. Pooja takes tuitions for 500/- per month.

Another famous tuition centre in the Jamuna Khadar area is located in the campus of Anjali-Ajay farms. This tuition centre was started by a graduate in Political Science from DU called Naresh. His centre is called Manthan and the poster reads "We provide knowledge. Not just information". He teaches Physics, Chemistry, Maths, Biology, Accounts, English, Business Studies, Political Science, History and Sociology for grades 11th and 12th. He also took special classes for all B.A. honours.

The story behind how Naresh got a place to set up his tuition centre was very controversial according to one of our informants. On the pretense of staying in the Khadar region for free for about a year, Naresh slowly hijacked some land and started his centre. He generated a big base of students who believed in his education. However he charged a lot of money for the tuitions. Our informant also said that, just to make profit, he charged money from people to get their voter ID and Aadhar cards made. Naresh's tuition centre is small scale as compared to the school set up by Sardarji Lobana. Naresh charges money for higher education whereas Lobana's school teaches children from primary school the basics in Maths and English. Lobana's school doesn't charge any money from the children.

In 2011 Sardarji's school was broken down by bulldozers along with other jhuggis and farms in the same area. When the bulldozing was on, many people resisted and asked the DDA officials to not break the school. Despite all the protest to save the

school, the DDA officials went ahead. After a PIL was filed about the destruction of the school, the government realized that they should not have broken down the school space as hundreds of children used to come here every day. In place of the school, a 'raen basera' (night shelter) was opened. It was for giving shelter to homeless people at night. However, the government did not create a separate space for the school, but gave permission to Sardarji Lobana's school to run here at day time. So as a multi-functional area, the 'raen basera' was a night shelter at night and a school at day time. Since May 1, 2015, an 'anganwadi' has been set up right outside the 'raen basera'. It is a governmental scheme to provide food to pregnant and lactating mothers as well as really tiny children. The food is nutritious. It includes chana, chaawal and daliya.

A few years back, a project called REAP or Renewable Energy Accountability Project was also introduced in the same area. REAP is a grassroots advocacy organization dedicated towards ensuring energy independence and reducing global warming.

This shows how the space where a school was started by the money of Sardarji Lobana, changed over the last 15 years. More and more institutions of the government penetrated in the same space. In this place of the Jamuna Khadar, one can see a concentration of governmental schemes. It is not spread out in the other regions of the Khadar. Maybe this is the case, as there is direct main road connectivity from this point. This space became highly politicized because of the school's demolition, 2011 onwards. By this time the importance of going to school and children being taught by 'masterji' had become such a mundane part of the Jamuna Khadar people's lives, that the demolition created a massive uproar. Thus, we see that government had to do a lot with demolition and the erection of school in Khadar area. Government was involved in production and destruction of educational setup. This again reemphasizes the obfuscating relationship with the government and the Khadar inhabitant.

We see that the state eventually penetrated into the inhabitants' lives directly after its mechanisms bulldozed over a school. This event opened up many other gates of governmental schemes in the Jamuna Khadar area such as Anganwadi, Raen Basera, Project REAP etcetera. A main road has also been constructed on this side

of the road, but one also sees metro-construction and Barapullah construction like skyscrapers towering and crowding the sky above the road. So, the road did not seem like a construction for the convenience of the Khadar inhabitants' lives but the facilitation of projects the state had initiated. Now the road is used by children to go to school, it becomes easier for them to walk till school each morning and afternoon. Even officers of Aanganwadi scheme, find the construction of the road convenient.

Educational structures in and outside the Khadar region is opening up many new opportunities for the Jamuna Khadar inhabitants. The government schools in Mayur Vihar provide for basic school education under the CBSE curriculum, but children also travel for tuitions outside into the city. Many tutors and stitching-instructors (silai Kendra) come into the Khadar region to teach girls how to stitch.

CONCLUSION:

After spending three weeks in Yamuna Khadar we conclude that a landscape occupied by diverse people from diverse region could not be categorized uniformly under one homogeneous category. Our main idea was to apprehend the everyday life that the farmers constructed in presence of the other actors like mafia and government and also understand everyday life in how they fashion the most prosaic activities in a deep meaningful way. We tried to see the way the inhabitants created the space by reflecting upon structures back in the villages. However, interaction with city and city space created a mix atmosphere. The place we studied, we saw how the state seeped into the spatial dimensions of the Khadar region. There was a medley created between the farmers, the state and the mafia. One can see how in the various microcosms, a macro structure of the state is reflected, through interactions of different players.

LIMITATIONS:

The first limitation was management of time. The Jamuna Khadar region is the name given to the fertile river bed alongside the 22km long Yamuna River in Delhi. We focused on a very small part of the Khadar region. And we gathered our data from a sample size of 20-40 people, out of the 3000-4000 inhabitants. It was a

tough task to interview people within 3 weeks and form reports in such a short time. We still tried to understand the depth of their lives in that little time.

The second limitation was resources. We did not get access to the owners of the land, or the mafia, as they were not located in the field but far away from it. Since we were only 3 people, we stuck together and could not divide work. This was partly because we were all girls, there was no network coverage in the field to keep in touch with one another and we did not have much knowledge of the paths and trails of the Jamuna Khadar region. There is not much literature available on the inhabitants of the Jamuna Khadar. Therefore to set out into the field by creating fresh concepts and carefully analyzing things was a task as inexperienced and first-time field researchers.

Our presentation in the field was the third limitation. The presentation can be divided into three parts- (a) clothing (b) language (c) behaviour.

We consciously decided to wear salwar-kameez with dupatta draped over the shoulders. We also carried backpacks. We consciously decided to wear simple-looking clothes that did not draw too much attention. We did not want the attention to be drawn towards us. We did not want to create the polarized distinction between 'us' and 'them'.

We knew that all our questions had to be formulated in 'bol-chaal' Hindi (commonsensical spoken Hindi). Even though we tried our best to speak in Hindi, our Hindi differed in great measures from theirs as there was stark contrast in the dialects. They did use certain English words in between sentences. While they responded to us, certain terms became tough to decipher for one of us, but overall the meanings of sentences were understandable. We did realize that terms lose their charm when they are translated or just understood in their function, but not their essence. So we tried our best to struggle with the terms they used and capture its essence. The presentation of our behavior was also consciously mapped. We tried not to stick together and tried to notice different aspects in the same field. In the process, we were always around one another but we always ended up being interested in different aspects of the scene. We also decided not to talk to each other especially in English in front of them. We felt that this would make them uncomfortable. This we thought might even make them think that we are discussing them, even when we weren't. The usage of English, we thought, would have alienated our respondents.
