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**This City is Divided**

**By Harsh Agarwal**

THIS CITY IS DIVIDED

It is a strange paradox that those who build our homes are 'homeless' themselves. They are completely abandoned both by the city and by our so-called 'civilized' society. They are the unseen backbone of our city but are unfortunately considered no more than 'human garbage' of this metropolis, perhaps that is why prior to a VIP visit in any area, both the homeless and the area's garbage are removed likewise.

The rift between the rich and the poor in the city has widened so much that it socially classifies them into two distinct species. This rift becomes much more evident during the night when one section of the society struggles to sleep on the road without even a proper meal or a blanket and the other section celebrates every moment of it's life, ostentatiously. It seems as if at one end the human body is dying but on the other end the 'invincible soul' is dying.

They have built the greatest of infrastructure of this city, making Delhi proud of it. They are the invisible hands behind the dream Metro project, they are the unknown faces who have made Delhi 'city of flyovers' but unfortunately they themselves are left to sleep on the street with a mere rag or a torn sheet of cloth to cover their body in the frigid winter. Consequently, thousands of these poor homeless die every winter, fighting the one sided battle against the mighty nature and we hardly even think about it.

We always live under a clout that these poor homeless on roads are drunkards, drug addicts, thieves, criminals' etc. without actually peeping into their real lives or realizing their condition, which is in acute shambles. No one is born homeless; they are merely the victims of adverse circumstances. Most of them have gone through some tragedy or severe mental trauma in the past, eventually bringing them to their present unfortunate state. Many have lost their entire family in some calamity, many have faced serious financial loses, many are the victims of trafficking, which has brought them on roads and are now homeless without any relatives or friends and these difficult circumstances have made them rag pickers, construction workers, vendors, porters, street sex workers, rickshaw pullers, etc. They are

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considered as the nuisance workforce of Delhi but without them the city would come to a stand still at any moment.

But do we ever question ourselves as to how these people manage their daily chores? Where do they keep their clothes? Where do they take bath? Where do they keep their savings? Who cares for them when they are ill? Perhaps NOT, because either we are too occupied by our own unending desires that we hardly find any time to think about them or we are driven by hedonism that we deliberately blindfold ourselves from the reality. Some of us find various reasons to convince ourselves that poor and destitute are destined to live like this because of their own deeds. Some of us are in the foolish race to pile up money and safeguard the unseen future, while the remaining few empathize with their sordid condition by merely passing the onus onto our politicians or the inefficient MCD.

These poor homeless are absolutely alone in this world and have no one to share their sorrows or

happiness. Alas they prefer to go into a state of oblivion by taking to alcohol or drugs, whenever emotionally stimulated or physically pained. This loneliness coupled with poverty and past trauma in their life, sometimes causes extreme mental turbulence, leaving them in a state of complete insanity.

We constantly try to distance ourselves from them. Instead of helping them to rebuild their ruined life and alleviate their pain at the time of their greatest need, we actually maul them to the extent that they lose all the humane element present in them and thus instill in them a feeling of hatred towards society at large and indirectly encourage them to commit crime to keep themselves alive. It would be then totally wrong on our part to expect peace and harmony in our surroundings when the other half of the society is still lamenting in pain.

It is, therefore, an uncanny contrast that one section of the society piles up innumerable wealth to flaunt it, while the other section struggles even for the most basic human needs. It is not our need but our greed, which has totally desensitized us from the sight of any human sufferings, and perhaps that is why we are not affected by the mounting number of casualties occurring due to severe cold, with each passing day. Every night these poor homeless sleep with fear in their eyes, whether they will survive to see the next day's sunrise or not.

They are the bona fide citizens of our country just like all of us, but it seems as if we are living in a plutocratic society where poor and destitute have no rights, dignity and shelter to live? Or perhaps they don't have any identity or address to avail the voting right to be a part of our democratic system. Therefore they don't attract any political party or leadership towards their plight and hence their problems are neither properly noticed nor rightly addressed in any democratic forum.

By the time they are in their mid-thirties, the extremes of weather and arduous living condition bless them with numerous diseases and bring overage in their appearance. In a short span of time they probably see life so closely that they become completely crestfallen and lose all hopes from their lives and this world. They believe in no religion, no caste and lose all faith. For them the word 'future' holds no more meaning than just a wait for that fateful night when they will go into an eternal sleep of their life. When will 'India shine' for these poor homeless? Perhaps when we all wake up...

Written by Harsh Agarwal for Prayas

Prayas is running 4 night shelter homes for these people. If you want to help us in this endeavour by donating blankets and wollen clothes then you can ontact us by visiting our website

[www.prayaschildren.org](http://www.prayaschildren.org)

Harsh Agarwal is working as a freelancer for Prayas

## **Travel Tips For Paris**

**By Sharon Stajda**

Paris is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, and has a well–deserved reputation to be a cultural icon of Europe. Getting around in Paris is easy, but driving is not the recommended way to see this beautiful city. For the tourist, walking may be one of the best ways to see the city because you'll have the opportunity to really savor the full ambience of Parisian streets, shops, neighborhoods and magnificent historical buildings and museums. Public transportation is readily available. For instance, there is the metro, busses, and commuter trains. There are passes available to make this an affordable and convenient option. Paris also has a fleet of taxis, riverboats, and bicycle and roller blade rentals.

Another thing to keep in mind about Paris, as a tourist, is that Paris is divided into districts called Arrondissement; there are twenty in total. This is significant because directions, guides and general tourist information will use these district identifiers for directions. For instance The Louvre is in the first district closest to the center of the city. Every district has characteristics that are distinct and represent the diversity and variety that this famous city provides. In addition The Seine also serves as a geographical division as well, with everything to the north of the river being The Right bank and the to the south; the Left Bank. The two regions also have distinct flavor and features.

One of the most wonderful aspects of Paris is the cornucopia of museums. For example, the Louvre that was opened in 1793 has over 300,000 exhibits and is located at 99 Rue de Rivoli. Also located on Rue de Rivoli is the Mus'ee des Arts Decoratifs. Another interesting and lovely museum is The Mus'ee Marmottan, which is rarely crowded and features masterful works of art, this gem is located 2 rue Louis Boilly. Paris is also home of some of the most significant historical buildings in the world including Notre–Dame Cathedral, and Sainte–Chapelle. Other great points of interest include the Eiffel Tower, Place de la Concorde, and Sacre'–Cour, a Parisian Landmark since the 19th century.

Paris is packed with interesting and stimulating places. It has for years been like a magnet to artisans, writers and great thinkers. There are boutiques, bakeries and picturesque cafes; this is the destination of lovers of art and culture. There is something to do every moment of your trip, but be sure to relax and enjoy the ambience of this historical and charming city.

Sharon Stajda loves to travel and write about it. For more information about Paris, please visit the

following URL:

<http://www.oldandsold.com/articles35/paris-1.shtml>

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