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Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Slums of Kolkata – Perils and Prospects

- **Format:**

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- **Abstract:**

Slums of Kolkata symbolize strength of survival of humanity in its extreme environmental boundaries. Housing about one third of the city population, the slums of Kolkata provide one of the highest urban densities of the world. Meager earning in diversified job options engage men, women and children in immense struggle for existence from dawn to dusk where delineation of legality is blurred. A wide range of involvement of slum dwellers as daily waged labourers and industrial workers to formal jobs also accommodate prostitution and illicit trade with accepted social indifference. Deficient access to basic needs, urban infrastructure, education and health facilities make matters worse leading to poverty and perpetual health issues. The slums of Kolkata, as in

many other towns in India, continued to exist and grow in spite of various government policies and programme through ages to eradicate, improve and upgrade slums, with all its contradictions and diversities.

The author intends to present in the paper his personal experiences in exploration of the diversified layers of issues involved in slums of Kolkata. Constraints in physical infrastructure, amenities, social issues, health risk and empowerment of the dwellers of several slums in various pockets of Kolkata were studied and analyzed. Historical context of slum formation was found to be relevant even in the present day, which is reflected in tenancy and ownership. Relevance of religion, caste, creed, mother tongue, origin and mutual professional dependency in forming clusters are explored. Author attempts to delve with such issues, though gaining full penetration to the system was found to be perilous. Author concludes that a decisive point must be reached to come closer to end the immense suffering of the slum dwellers with proper handling of policy and financial instruments at hand, and also suggested necessary amendments in them towards empowering the slum dwellers appropriately.

• **Author Biography:**

Dr. Arup Sarkar is a Professor of Architecture, Urban and Regional Planning, and former head of the Department of Architecture Town and Regional Planning, Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, Shibpur, in the state of West Bengal, India. He acquired Bachelor of Architecture from Calcutta University, Master of Urban and Regional Planning from School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi and Ph.D. from Bengal Engineering and Science University, Shibpur. Engaged in teaching since 1991, his interests revolved largely around urban and rural housing issues, slum development, regeneration of blighted areas, restoration of heritage architecture and urban growth issues. His research interest also includes application of Remote Sensing and GIS technologies in Urban and regional planning. He completed several research projects sponsored by Government of India such as Ecological imperatives on land use planning of wetlands of Kolkata; and Impact of flood on rural habitat.