RESEARCH ARTICLE   OPEN ACCESS

The Relationship Between Spatial Segregation and Social Stratification in India's Metropolitan Cities

Swara Shah

(Student at FLAME University, Lavale, Pune, Mumbai)
Email: swara.shah@flame.edu.in)

--*************************------------------------------------

Abstract:

Out of the many assurances that urbanization brings, shattering the rigidities and discrimination that different strata of the society face remain most prevalent. With the birth of cosmopolitan and metropolitan cities in India, the promises of success, and wealth are peddled through urbanization. However, these cities are also home to persistent discrimination, prejudice, and intolerance. This springs from one's particular caste, religion, gender, or marital status. India's metropolitan cities have a notorious history of landlords and co-operative housing societies denying housing to tenants on illegal grounds. Through the analysis of research, this paper aims to draw out themes and arguments regarding the socio-spatial segregation and the subsequent exclusion that follows in cities such as Mumbai and Delhi. With the usage of secondary research and descriptive data, the author has aimed to probe into cases of spatial inequality and the bigotry that still persists.

Keywords —**Caste, Gender, Religion, Segregation, Sociology, Stratification, Prejudice.**

--*************************------------------------------------

I.   INTRODUCTION

Mumbai is known as the entertainment, fashion, and financial capital, whereas Bangalore is named the Silicon Valley of India. Delhi has a literacy rate of 89%, whilst Pune has the 5th largest metropolitan economy in the country. Despite all of these glorious statistics, an analysis of the residential patterns in these cities reveal strong and distinctive trends that spring from differences. Dr. BR. Ambedkar stated how "the Hindus live in the village, and the untouchables live in the ghetto" (Ambedkar, 2014). He thus encouraged the marginalized to move towards cities. However, not much has changed post doing the same. Theoretical framework observes that one's caste, gender, religion, and marital status remains salient and is also the marker of important decisions such as area of residence, rent, educational and work opportunities, living conditions, health, etc. What's more, it also shapes and moulds social networking, interactions, and societal ideas of unity and commune building. In areas where competition, violence, and conflict are tenfold, minorities end up with lesser economic opportunities and lesser skills (Dupont, 2002). These are the different ways in which social stratification pans out in urban spaces, regardless of the common assumption being that urban spaces are secular, non-discriminatory, and equally opportunistic for all.

There has been multitudinous research on therelationship between social status and segregation by residence. The researchers mentioned have collected data from election booths, ward-level demographics, and the Sachar Committee Report. All of them highlight a non-composite socio-spatial segregation that has persisted historically and continues to do so (Sachar, 2006). These clustering processes speak volumes of the failure of law and order and societal attitudes.

Drawing from that, the three-pronged objectives of this paper aim to:

- Examine and analyse socio-spatial segregation and clusters
- Evaluate how these segregations translate in terms of exclusionary opportunities and polarization of attitudes
- Probe into specific cases in the news that highlight breaching of law and order

By doing so, the author hopes to identify trends and themes that shed light upon the urban myth of equality, and further look at how social stratification manifests in urban spaces.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A study that aims to highlight socio-spatial segregation in east Delhi focuses on secondary maps and data from the census (Dupont, 2002). The authors also gather in-depth interviews from primary sources and combine their qualitative and quantitative findings. It was found that over 100 village settlements were sucked up by urban planning, leading to the economically poorer sections consigning to squatters, slums, and informal settlements. Most of these were temporarily built jhonpris. The authors reveal a trend where the upper class-population make up the urban core, while the lower classes reside densely in the fringes or the peripheries. They further reveal the paradoxical trend of homogeneity and heterogeneity. Those from an upper class are clustered together in lieu of "living amongst our own type of people" whilst also creating a cycle of dependency with the lower class that provide them with day-to-day services. Alarming rates of violence and riffs have led to the upper classes erecting fences, bridges, and gates so as keep the 'other' outside. Furthermore, the study also reveals that 42% of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes— namely the Gujjars and the Jatavs— reside in urban villages (Dupont, 2002). It was found that untouchability practices were also followed. These filtering mechanisms have led to a range of exclusionary and ostracizing disadvantages.

A similar study took help from the 2001 census and ward level data of India's seven largest cities (Vithayathil& Singh, 2012). It was found that in order to produce an even distribution by caste in Mumbai, 23% of SCs and STs would have to move. For Ahmedabad, the number rises to 33%. When producing similar statistical analysis by gender and literacy rates, it was found that caste remains the largest factor of disparity in cities.

Zooming into houseowner attitudes and housing market trends, a study by SukhadeoThorat and several other researchers reveals gross discrimination towards Dalits and Muslims in Delhi (Thorat et al., 2015). By conducting telephonic and face-to-face audits, the authors managed to gather Curriculum Vitae of 1479 potential home-seekers that only differed in their religions and castes (through names). After analysing the monthly rent, advance, and behavioural attributes, it was found that all upper-caste tenants received a positive response, whereas the rate of positive response fell to 48% for Dalits and 28% for Muslims. After qualitatively analysingbehaviour, it was found that some landlords refused to proceed further if the caste was unclear through the name. Sometimes, a Dalit was asked to immediately vacate the housing if the landlord found out his caste later on. In a similar pattern, Muslims faced even greater outright rejection, with majority of it coming from a Hindu landlord of the highest caste. They were associated with terms like 'pollution' 'safety' and 'uncleanliness' especially due to their non-vegetarianism. It was observed that regardless of a Dalit or Muslim being willing to pay the market value or higher, housing was instantly denied.

It must not be overlooked that these lived realities have resulted in extremely painful experiences that range from paying unreasonably inflated prices to the policing of food habits. The authors also accounted the comparatively higher time and money spent searching for a living, commuting to work, type and size of housing, and the accessibility of other resources (Thorat et al., 2015).

Furthermore, media and the news too are rife with cases of discrimination. In 2015, a Muslim

woman in Mumbai was suddenly deprived of housing by her broker one day before she was about to move. Growing up in Gujrat and witnessing the riots of 2002, she stated how she expected more from Mumbai. However, she was met with similar patterns of ghettoization and was also expected to sign a no-objection certificate if she were ever to face harassment or religious persecution from her neighbours. Post her denying to follow these conditions, the broker threatened to complain to the police and the building representatives explained the society's 'No Muslim' rule to her. The builder was an upper-class Gujarati whose complaint the Muslim woman took to the National Human Rights Commission (Rashid, 2021).

III.   DISCUSSION

All these studies go to show how in India, housing isn't just looked at on an economic basis, but instead involves a proliferation of religion, caste, gender, and marital status. After decades, this has become a self-fulfilling prophecy; wherein those from different social strata involuntarily live in separate clusters since that is easier than facing discrimination on several levels every day. Hence, this cycle of segregation creates an automatic process that is successful in gatekeeping the minorities and marginalized.

Despite the knowledge of this being a known phenomenon, there isn't enough study on the psychological trauma and experiences that segregation leads to. A home is supposed to be where one comes back to after toiling all day. Even that is met with moral policing on food habits, choice of partner, or the choice of staying single. This cycle of being ostracized from the society and immediate community can be an extremely distressing ordeal. Needless to say, it also comes with being deprived of resources that come more easily to the privileged.

While the BMC in Mumbai has passed a resolution that prevents land authorization to builders under cases of discrimination, it is a policy that still lacks the go-ahead by the Urban Development Ministry (Rashid, 2021). Therefore,

the execution of this resolution and the punishments that follow still remain unexercised. Furthermore, there must also be a strict implementation of an adequate notice period so as to aid the house-hunting process. The marginalized are seldom left out from all sorts of Housing and Real Estate development acts (Phadke, 2017). Sometimes, there is a wide gap that exists between the passing and the carrying out of the law. It thus becomes an unspoken rule to have clusters of Gujaratis, Parsis, Muslims, etc. Similarly, while an unmarried individual cannot be legally banned from residing in a housing society, there are several 'family based and homely' residences that deny housing upon the grounds of bachelor's being a negative influence, threat, or risk (Chatterji, 2015). This also goes to show the beliefs of the Indian society towards later marriage, singlehood, or abstinence from marriage. Sometimes, unmarried couples must also be expected to produce a marriage certificate in order to live together.

IV.   CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, it is imperative to have nation-wide anti-discrimination laws that emulate the fraternity and secularity that resides in the heart of the Indian Constitution. The Sachar Committee Report also suggests incentives and motivations for those that builders and residences that encourage a population that is more diverse and equal in its composition. Further research can look into dominant religious, caste-based, and gender-based ghettos and the lives of those living at the fringes to fully understand the psychological trauma behind the same. It is imperative to implement a non-discriminatory housing act from the Centre. Only then can cities be truly known for their diversity and equality of opportunities.

REFERENCES

[1] Ambedkar, B. (2014, January). Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: 'who were the Shudras?' and 'the untouchables. People's Archive of Rural India. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from https://ruralindiaonline.org/en/library/resource/dr-babasaheb-ambedkar-vol-7-who-were-the-shudras-and-the-untouchables---who-were-they-and-why-they-became-untouchables/

[2] Chatterji, R. (2015, August 13). Marriage certificate, please! no place to live in sin in 'modern' Mumbai -Specials News,Firstpost. Firstpost. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from https://www.firstpost.com/specials/marriage-certificate-please-no-place-to-live-in-sin-in-modern-mumbai-2371202.html

[3] Dupont, V. (2002, December). Socio-spatial di erentiation and residential segregation in Delhi... A Question of Scale? Retrieved March 31, 2022, from http://www1.geo.ntnu.edu.tw/~moise/Data/Books/Social/03%20race%20and%20ethnic%20groups/sociospatial%20differentiation%20and%20residential%20segregation%20in%20delhi.pdf

[4] Phadke, M. (2017, March 21). Builders in Maharashtra can't refuse flats to buyers over eating habits. Hindustan Times. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from https://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/builders-in-mumbai-can-t-refuse-flats-to-buyers-over-eating-habits/story-m599vVG9dbPED6rbe5s2mI.html

[5] Rashid, O. (2021, November 16). No flat for her in Mumbai because she is Muslim. Return to frontpage. Retrieved March 31, 2022, from https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/No-flat-for-her-in-Mumbai-because-she-is-Muslim/article60181199.ece

[6] Sachar, R. (2006). Implementation of Sachar committee recommendations. Minority Affairs. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from https://minorityaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/Follow-up-Sachar.pdf

[7] Thorat , S., Banerjee , A., Mishra , V., & Rizvi , F. (2015). Urban rental housing market - Caste and Religion Matters. Economic & Political Weekly. Retrieved March 31, 2022, from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Firdaus-Fatima-Rizvi/publication/282823466_Urban_rental_housing_market_Caste_and_religion_matters_in_access/links/5d84a731299bf1996f7facd1/Urban-rental-housing-market-Caste-and-religion-matters-in-access.pdf

[8] Vithayathil , T., & Singh , G. (2012). Spaces of discrimination - Residential Segregation in Indian Cities. Economic and Political Weekly. Retrieved March 31, 2022, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/41720139