

## **Reflecting the Settlement Pattern of Bombay Presidency with reference to its Graded Social Hierarchy**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Bombay Presidency had its varied angles manifested through the scholastic deliberations and discourses but the settlement pattern of Bombay presidency hardly received the attention it deserved from the sociological point of view. The present paper attempts to throw light on the spatial settlements of the Bombay Presidency in the colonial era and aftermath of colonial era. The present theme is more intriguing to unearth hitherto discreetly hidden social cry that talks about the settlement pattern and residential areas of the slum dwellers in Mumbai that akin to the hierarchical grading system. The villages as we believed to have its distinct population settlement with the locality of dalits at the periphery, however the paper argues that the urban areas or the Mumbai city was not remained immune from the influence of caste system. Though it can be seen that the caste observance in the customary practices of the Bombay public, their settlement pattern cannot be ignored for space makes lots of difference in shaping the social relations and mind set of the people.

**KEYWORDS:** settlement pattern, graded hierarchy, caste discrimination

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### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

The present theme of the paper based on the understanding that in Bombay the earlier settlement patterns were formed keeping in minds the cultural cognitions. The earlier emigrants to the Bombay city settled in the group where they had common culture, security and identity maintained factors at their disposal. The hegemony of upper caste elite didn't not allowed the dalits to settle in the centralize areas as the common cultural norms were missing. The comparatively better social economic prosperity, education, and historically drawn cultural advantages helped elites to settle in the centrifugal areas where they could have their dominance and surpass the public other than them. Dalits deprived of all the historic legacy could not have their settlements at the region where they could have got all the facilities but rather they were out of no alternative compelled to settle in the areas that were slushy, marshy, barren, trenched unhygienic, devoid of facilities where they had to face all kinds of hardships to survive and that were endowed with ignorance, poverty and social stigma.

The Bombay spatial settlement and public culture are both the offshoot of historical legacy that India followed for thousands of years for the emigrants who settled in Bombay followed and formed their residential settlement according to caste hierarchy as the settlements were formed keeping in view caste. However it should be understood that the settlements were not only presents the graded hierarchy but it also makes us understand the dreaded caste discrimination within discrimination. The organic geo-spatial settlements represent the appropriation of landforms based on one's own social status. However, it should be borne in mind that the subaltern whilst creating their own settlement struggled for reclaiming their voices over the spatial entity on which they had built their settlements. They started to carve and celebrate their own distinct identity owing to the tremendous influence of Dr. Ambedkar.

**Rationale:** The proposed research aims to make people understand their age old customary notionally formed cognition. The present research aims to showcase the face of cities which in reality ridden with deeply seated prejudiced mind set. Though we find that the cities gel to easily and there is illusionary understanding amongst its demographic populace that cities are more vibrant, dynamic and there is no place for discrimination. However that is the most apparent conspicuously portrayed face of the city but the intrinsic hidden cultural beliefs are more dynamic and live than the overtly portrayed dynamics of Bombay. The heritage, tourism, monuments the public re-creation are more observed parts of city but the most needed attention the city require is at its public, culture and framing of mindset who settled in the cities periphery owing to the historic depravity.

**Hypothesis:** 1. The Bombay Presidency suffered from the historic hegemony of the elites that culminated in making the dalits to have spatial settlement in the area which were not suitable to live.

2. The settlement pattern of the public in Bombay showcases the imprint of graded hierarchical replica.

3. The dalits in Bombay Presidency reclaimed the public spaces and made livable. They not only reclaimed for dignity but also the city's abandoned space that only display their resilience.

**II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The descriptive and interpretative methodology has been used for present research at the same time data based on empirical research has been used.

**Result:** The present research would help understand the contribution of dalits' in making of Bombay city. It will also help to do away with the earlier notion that the cities don't suffer from discrimination but people will understand the different modus operandi that are evolved to know one's social status in society. It will help government to make policies related to settlement in the urban space based on the principles of uniformity.

**Reflecting the Settlement Pattern of Bombay Presidency with reference to its Graded Social Hierarchy**

The spatial demographic fabrics of Bombay city has been the core spirit of city's vibrant and vivacious character for the years now. Amidst so many different characteristics of Bombay, the pattern of spatial settlement embedded with myriad inherent susceptible vulnerability leading towards creation of hierarchical social pattern that showcases the cognitive engagement of social fabrics with differentiating discrimination based on the customary understanding. Further the most common gross misunderstanding flaunted by the scholarship is that the cities generally don't suffer the brunt of casteism owing to its composite hybridism. However, the face of Bombay city discards the assumptions based theories for they fail to understand the intrinsic intersectional social character of the city.

The present paper not only attempts to exhibit the historically developed spatial settlements having an imprint of social hierarchy in the city of Bombay but it also brings out the interesting manifestations of subaltern involving their assertion, reinforcement and reclamation over the public space. Moreover the paper also investigates into the real lives ground situation of dalits'. The caste wise genesis of alleys and gullies in cities' slums, its inter-linkages, interconnections, interactions within and at large, evidently display layers within layers of the wholesome social structure.

**The Demographic Sketch of Bombay**

The Bombay Presidency had a large and diverse population. It is consisted of people belonging to different castes and religions giving different fundamental flavour of its unique identity that is attached with caste and religion. Another strikingly distinctive phenomenon attached to the city is its population that is mainly made up of the immigrants<sup>i</sup> from the invariable quadrants of the country. The in migrants from the presidency displaying the similar cultural entity are bound to follow the kindred ship owing to nurturing its distinctive feature that gives rise to multiple fissures resulting in the discrimination and depravity. It also gives rise to hegemonic relations amongst the different castes according to its historically defined hierarchy.

The Thana was already supplying Bombay with large a stream of immigrants. There were immigrants from Cutch who were known as Cutchi immigrates largely involved in trade. They were mainly Bhatias, Khojas, Mnons, Vanis and Brahmans came to Bombay in large numbers. They were wealthy immigrants and afford to support large number of dependent on them. Likewise Poona was also naturally been a great source of Bombay immigrants. Surat had been the largely streamed by the immigrants as the flow of labours going to Ahmadabad was seen constant. The most important stream was from the Punjab and North India. The immigrants from the Ahmednagar and Nasik had come to Bombay with their women folk with the intention to permanently settle down in Bombay as the conditions of theirs in villages were worst. The Ahmednagar immigrants show up strongly in terms of actual work force.<sup>ii</sup>

The immigrants from the Ahmadnagar were basically belonging to depressed castes category the following table showcased the immigrants coming to Bombay Presidency and the castes that migrated largely in between 1911 and 1921.

**Immigrant from Ahmadnagar in 1911 and 1921.**

Principal castes	Number of immigrants	
	1911	1921
Chamar of Mochi-----	450	2561
Dhed or Mahar-----	3132	16235
Maratha -----	4006	12,046
Sheikh-----	1432	1880
Indian Christians-----	Not given	2264

Source: census of Bombay cities.

The table depicts the number of depressed classes immigrants were increasing over the years as the castes that immigrated largely were Chamar or Mochi, Mahar. And other than depressed classes were Marathas, Sheikhs and Indian Christians. The population of depressed castes in Bombay in the year 1911 was 450 but exactly after ten years in the decennial census the population has shot up to six times more than previous i.e. 2561 of Chamars and Mochi. Amidst the depressed classes the most migrated depressed caste was Mahar as its population in year 1911 was 3132 i.e. its migration to Bombay in comparison to Chamar or Mochi was nearly seven times more in 1911 and six times more in the year 1921. The depressed caste Mahar migrated five times more than the previous census i.e. in the year 1921 it had 16324 total populations. It is noteworthy to mention that the upper caste elite caste Maratha had considerably more population as compared to its depressed classes contemporaneous but its consistency in terms of migration had been reduced as compared to Mahar caste for it could migrate only three times more whereas caste-Mahar migrated six times more than its earlier status. It depicts the most rapid migration on the part of depressed castes in the city of Bombay in search of better life opportunity and status to fulfill aspirations.

The number of Mahars is noticeable. The number of this caste enumerated in (1) Ahmednagar and (2) in Bombay but born at Ahmednagar in 1911 and 1921 were as follows:-

	1911	1921
• Enumerated in Ahmadnagar---	72,411	39,278
*Enumerated in Bombay but born Ahmadnagar-----	3,132	16,235
	75,443	55,519

It will be seen that the reduction in this caste in the Ahmadnagar District amounted to no less than 33,133 and of these no less than 13,103 came to Bombay. Nor is the influx of Mahars confined to immigrants from the Nagar District. There appears to be a gradual drifting into Bombay of the great Mahar Caste of all the Marathi speaking districts, and especially the Deccan. Taking the following Districts-Nagar, Colaba, Nasik, Poona, Ratnagiri, Satara and Sholapur- the following figures of Mahar Immigrants to Bombay in 1911 and 1921.<sup>iii</sup>

**Bombay census 1921**

Year	Male	Females	Total
1911	23,192	16,581	39,723
1921	42,667	27,667	70,334
	+84%	+67%	+77%

Not only the dalit migrates almost doubled but also the caste Maratha doubled in population. The immigrants of the different castes especially the Marathas and lower castes followed industrial occupations. The above table depicts the more migration by the male population as compared to female. The male immigrants to Bombay have increased more than double but the female immigrants showed up slow but steady growth.

**Strength of the principal castes in Bombay 1911 and 1921.**

	1911	1921
Mahar, Dhed, and Holiya	57,855	92,481
Mang or Madig	6,480	7,742
Chambhar or Mochi	21,305	27,589
Bhangi or Halalkhor	5,645	6,015

Of all the depressed classes the major strength of Mahar, Dedia and Holiyas was more and they were the principal castes settlers as compared to the other depressed castes such as Mang and Madig whose strength was not even a percent as compared to Mahar, Dedia and Holiyas population strength. Followed by Mahars were Chambhars or Mochis. The most important increase was of Brahman and Mahars followed by other castes. . In

these cases the castes were so rigid and the nomenclatures certain that the census enumerators confidently said that the increase was genuine.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Spatial Patterns of Social Segregations in Bombay City**

The spatial pattern of population settlement in Bombay presidency was characterized by castes segregation. So far we have seen that the immigrants found out their occupation in the industrial area and the maximum population that got engaged in the occupation was belonged to the depressed classes group. In Bombay city the population concentration in terms of its spatial settlement took place on the basis of historically nurtured social beliefs. The spatial segregation in the city of Bombay had shown the systematic stratification. Caste based urban residential segregation operate in contemporary India. The patterns of urban segregation offer an important window to understanding the robust perseverance of caste structures in contemporary India.<sup>v</sup> The depressed classes industrial workers were offered jobs that involved more physical labour for the want of education. Given the social status the depressed classes preferred to work in the conditions as was offered to them out of not alternatives. As it has been observed historically that the depressed classes settlements were situated on the fringes of the main area in any village set up. The arrival of depressed classes' immigrants to the cities will have to follow the similar pattern owing to their social status. They settled in the areas which were peripheries formed to the central bastions of elitists then be it the upper caste elites or the British. A broad division of society into castes determined to a great extent, spatial patterns and internal arrangements. Highly placed social groups lived in central areas, and lower-status groups resided at their peripheries in accordance with the generally accepted concept.<sup>vi</sup>

The formation of the homogeneous structuring of residential areas was the result of horizontal stratification. In cities too the elitist virtually depended on the services of the dalits. The social status and economic dependence on the upper caste elites led to formation of the residential structures in Bombay as the low classes might have expected both employment and income from those that were being served. The optimal servicing of high groups by low one implies that each group lived neat another group. The features of the system in village simply got transferred to the cities with slight variation as the nature of work in villages was different than that of the nature of work and patron-client relationship in the cities. It was the reflection of system of Balutedari where the lower castes' performed various services to the upper castes. The pattern of providing services to the upper caste elites of the city continued the system of Balutedari in terms of providing foods and services in term s of cash and kinds. In Bombay city this was the fact which could be perspicuously seemed in many households of lower castes where the women folks worked in the houses of upper caste elites used to get the goods in kinds mostly in the form of cooked food, grains which were not used by elitist and the clothiers which are often second hand worn by patron. The life in the slum and the posh settlements should be seen from the prism of patron –client relations as this system itself based on the caste and the economies of the cities were mostly run by the invaluable labour of the lower castes. Thus the concept of Jajmani is the powerful concept that governs the social as well as the economic structure of the urban fabric.<sup>vii</sup> The lower caste are historically disadvantaged group started leading towards the cities in an aspiration of better life but they didn't escape the vicious net of caste discrimination as they disproportionately lived in slums as their segregation was based on the socio-economic status, caste and religion.<sup>viii</sup> The studies conducted by Mehta (1969) found that the degree of segregation among the Brahmins and the depressed classes and also found that the settlements of the upper castes were placed at the centralized hub whereas the lower castes got settled in the decentralized area.<sup>ix</sup>

The spatial settlement of dalits in cites reprised the settlement pattern of villages for the depressed classes immigration towards the cities were driven by the factors of affinity, community safety, the historical experience of exclusion and depravity. Their immigration was without any assets as they had to create their world out of zero. When it came to settlement, they settled wherever their employability facilitated them; they served in the occupations that were toiling ridden with drudgery. The spatial settlement was done in the areas that were inferior in nature as they were not given access to the areas where the posh areas were having its built up structures.

The thought for the depressed classes' inclusive housing settlement with mix settlement was far reaching dream then for we see that the government inclination towards having an inclusive settlement in the cities has remained unfulfilled till date owing to multiple factors. The slum dwellers need was not given significance; neither was it taken into account for having dignified living associated with the housing in cities. Over the years one see that the residential settlements and segregation in cities based on caste have remained as it is for the government's direct intervention in the absence of exclusively inclusive policies for the dalits in the cities slums have not yet completely designed and implemented thoroughly. As a result the caste identities have shaped the pattern of cities as they were either named after their castes, community, or the leader from the community. These residential patterns have resulted in caste discrimination and inequality. The caste discrimination in the cities slum settlement was based on its caste wise settlement as the castes had its residential areas designed in the manner that would percolate cultural uniformity keeping in mind the past

cultural traits. As a matter of facts the spatial residential patterns in Bombay city were the results of vicious historical past. The string of the immigrants after immigrant towards the cities resulted in cohabitation of people belonging to particular caste settling down in galleys and alleys. To such a settlement there should have been strong timely intervention from the government's local self bodies to address the continuous discrimination and its multiple layers. The residential segregation and its evils are multiple as the segregation itself is against the spirit of constitution. Here government doesn't invoke the fundamental rights article against such widely practiced discrimination.

#### **Give case studies**

Here some case studies have been cited that reflected the patterns of settlements. The slum settlement at the Mumbai some regions like vileparle, Santacruz, Jogeshwari, Malad, Khar reflected the settlements that were developed to the side of highways. The further intriguing into its settlement pattern reflected the sense of community formation based on the castes. The clusters of community essentially gave the flavor of distinct castes that had conglomerated together owing its cultural traits and historic legacy. The separation between them is distinctly marked by the alleys and galleys. The populations of historically deprived and underprivileged communities lived distinctively separate within their hierarchical grade. The typical formation of settlement would be named as Mang galley, Vader Pada, Kunchikurvi vasti, Valmiki nagar, Bhangi wada, Gavthan, kathewadi etc

It is noteworthy to mention that the outside immigrants from north India and south India had to suffer less on account of their caste identity than the label of being outsider. Their ethnicity was the subject of minimal concern in Bombay city as were identified as the Bhaiyyas and the Madrasis irrespective of their distinct regions and ethnicity. These comprehensions by the cities aboriginal population probably were not aware of the existence of numerous castes within the north Indians and south Indians equally. As for them their being outsider itself served the all purpose and they cannot become the part of locals who are dominant by the virtues of being son of soils. The discrimination with the outsiders on the basis of caste is not followed stringently as compare to the discriminations with the locals for historic awareness of communities' consciousness is so sharp that let to crystallize the beliefs. On the other hand the outsiders or migrants to Bombay cities who had settle downed in Bombay had their own community clustered that sharply distinguished their own identity and place in their society.

I found many tenants who stay on the rental basis in Bombay formed their clustered based on caste homogeneity. The caste consciousness amidst them is too strong that they shared the same space in their natives and in the cities where they have migrated.

Government didn't intervene as it has no specific plan for development of cities as results the cities were formed on the basis of historical legacy. The concept of democracy and the churning around the same didn't ever touch the subject of settlement pattern in cities. The local self government was itself in the process of learning and implementing and as a result the solid structural form or pattern for the cities development didn't show up the face. The modern global forces blew across the world at least being given the attention it deserved. The thing is that it not so that this subject had not been brought to the notice of authority but owing to already developed structures in the cities it was difficult to reshuffle the spatial settlements

### **III. CONCLUSION:**

The Social evils that existed in Indian society are not effaced with the changing situation in spite of all the universal democratic principles cutting across the society as the attempts are being made to establish the society beyond the border. The peoples are becoming increasingly aware of their place in society. However it must be stated that the forms of customs have underwent transformation by taking different shapes but the basic inherent beliefs still operate in the society. So far much more churning happened around the evils of caste society based on discrimination and inequality as many more measures were taken to eradicate it. However, it has not reaped any fruit. The policy makers should think striking at the root of the issue of discrimination by undertaking the studies on the spatial segregation and discrimination that emanates out of spatial settlement while designing the slum rehabilitation policies for the space is much important catalyst in regards to making one's own identities and forming new identities and names.

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<sup>i</sup> Census of India, 1921, vol. IX, Cities of Bombay Presidency, Superintendent of census operation, Bombay, 1922, p 16.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid,p.21.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>v</sup> Vithayathil, T and G Singh (2012): “Spaces of Discrimination,” *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol 47, No 37, pp 60.

<sup>vi</sup> Hans, Schenx (1986): “Residential Immobility in Urban India,” *Geographical Review* , Vol. 76, No. 2, Thematic Issue: Asian Urbanization, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., p.188.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>viii</sup> Trina Vithayathil and Gayatri Singh, ‘Spaces of Discrimination: Residential Segregation in Indian Cities’ *Economic and Political Weekly* , September 15, 2012, Vol. 47, No. 37 ,y,p.60.

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid. p.64.

Note: The case studies are based on the field work, interviews