



ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN URBAN AREAS:

An approach to understand social conflicts within a City

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Abstract: Social inequality, as a negative outcome of urbanization, results in a social exclusion, segregation that limits people access to resources, essential services, political and economical rights by restricting people's participation in the city planning process in fair terms. This social exclusion ends up with various challenges such as urban poverty, unemployment, income inequalities, crime, delinquency, gender disparities and other social conflicts which need careful consideration. The fact cannot be overlooked that the current urban planning policies and programs lacks in evaluating the multidimensional impact of social inequality. Thus, this paper focuses on the significant aspects and scope of social inequalities in urban areas along with determinants and consequences with the emphasis on the importance of inclusive planning strategies to ensure social stability within a city.

Index Terms – Social conflicts, Gender disparities, Crime, Unemployment, Inclusive planning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Urbanization, as a way of human development and progress, is always associated with positive and negative outcomes. It provides economic growth, improved health care facilities, educational facilities, advanced communication & transportation networks, social integration among the cities that ensure growth and development despite the fact that whether these facilities are evenly accessible to all the sector of society and accessible by all or not is an important factor. Urbanization always acts as a spine for development still, this form of development cannot be measured as sustainable and inclusive, if it fails to provide equal benefits to all the citizens. In India, the current statistics indicates that 31.5% of the total population resides in the urban area and this percentage is increasing rapidly in the last two decades. There is no doubt in the fact that urbanization has strengthened the country's economic as well as enhanced the quality of life in many ways but at the same time it also resulted in certain challenges which are need be addressed. These challenges have a significant impact on urban lives which vary from environmental aspects to economic aspects and physical aspects to social aspects.

City, that ensures social, economic & political inclusion for every citizen irrespective of their age, gender, disability, caste, religion, race, origin & socio-economic background are considered as inclusive cities. In the context of the Indian cities more than 40% of their population is deprived of receiving basic facilities and rights that ultimately give rise to the inexorable situation of social inequalities. Inequality, social discrimination reproduces the formation of exclusion that jeopardizes the cohesion of our societies that cannot be resolved solely through absolute growth. The consequences of inequalities are evident at the city and metropolitan level with the isolation of the neighborhoods and the uncontrolled expansion of the territory that constitute a metropolis. Presently, approx 828 million, or 33% of the world's urban population live in slums and experience challenges, deprivations with a mixture of high degrees of poverty, unemployment and crime, along with the quality of housing, deprived sanitation and inadequate access to basic amenities. Thus Inclusivity, being a most important goal of sustainable development always lacks in terms of the social aspect of inclusive planning which require to be addressed in the city planning process by effective approaches and strategies.

II. DEFINING SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AND IT'S CAUSES IN URBAN AREAS

The term Social inequalities or social stratification speaks about irregular access to resources, power, and status among the different social groups. In a given geographical area when some portion of the population are deprived of getting the resources as compared to other and the resources are intrinsically uneven then it is known as social inequalities. In the context of urban areas it referred as the unequal access to education, health, employment opportunities, quality housing, transport and other facilities in respect of different status, caste, religion, gender and age groups.

When different causes of social inequalities are analyzed on the basis of urban planning aspect many factors have been observed that directly or indirectly drive the social discrimination issues in the cities. These factors can be classified into two major perspectives among which one is socio-economic factors and another one is urban planning issues. The socio-economic factors refers to the discrimination among the different social class, income inequality, social hierarchy, race and gender inequality that causes inequality between different groups in urban spaces. While urban planning issues such as uncontrolled urban growth, higher percentage of migration, improper spatial

planning, insufficient legislative approaches for urban poverty, lack of inclusive planning approaches are considered as the major causes that make the urban areas more socially vulnerable and results into various social conflicts. As the rapid population growth of cities is not properly managed by effective strategies it forces the urban poor to live in the shadow of urbanization. For example a higher percentage of the city population in India live in a slum in substandard houses with lack of sanitation and healthcare facilities. The growing rate of migration results in a shortage of employment and job opportunities which worsen the situation by increasing the rate of crime in the cities. Other than that due to lack of inclusive planning approaches, it is seen that some group of the society like women, elderly person and most children are more sensitive to these issues. Thus they always face difficulties in getting their rights in a city.

III. DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

Social inequality can be generally addressed as a concomitant progression of society that has an effect of limiting or harming a social group's status, class and circle. The economic divisions with the amalgamation of ethnic or religious groups, classes, are creating social inequality a global phenomenon. The areas under these inequalities includes voting rights, the extent of property rights, and access to education, access to health care facilities, quality of housing and most importantly the standard of living with quality neighbourhood life surrounding them. The following determinants of social inequalities are:

A. Health and Education

Health is an important factor that helps in understanding the social aspects in an urban area in a different manner. The definition of the WHO states that health is not merely the absence of disease, but a state of optimal, mental and social well-being. The health of a city basically depends on the people's way of living, in an urban area Isolation, insecurity, tension, anxiety are the common problems that are directly linked with the safety and wellbeing of the urban community. Due to rapid urbanization, the urban life is characterized by excessive traffic noise, mass congestion in public spaces, strikes and agitation by various social groups, inferiority complex due to an excessive competition which generates huge stress, strain and pressure on people's attitude. Deprived psychological well-being, quality of life and standard of living are the most pressing public health issues which are witnessed in the urban area, particularly among youth and young adults. The function of education acts as a social elevator which is gradually weakening thereby turning education into the social institute for fixing and reproduction of inequality in the society. Education affects well-being through:

- Resources that are useful on the labour market: education is a key to resource determinants of income, working conditions, and unemployment risks – all of which in turn are associated with well-being that any individual be capable of draw upon to strengthen their position in the labour market.
- Intangible resources that can be used to enhance well-being: it includes physical health, cognitive and communicative skills, coping skills, a sense of personal control, the availability of supportive social networks, and good family relations
- Potential educational opportunities or capabilities affect well-being: operates on the contextual level rather than on the individual level, and relates to research showing how social policies have externalities and can provide well-being benefits even to individuals who do not currently use them.

Education and self-sufficiency reinforce each other so women with good education and greater domestic self-sufficiency are knowledgeable about nurturing, take care and protect their children. Low education and low self-sufficiency do make it more difficult for women to find proper medical care and treatment, comply with quality instructions, and follow up with the better health care provider if the instructions seem ineffective. Thus educational and healthy living opportunities has both positive and negative impact in shaping the well-being of the urban society, the equality of educational opportunities in a society is the key factor that moderates the association between social background and well-being. Inclusive policies that provide opportunities for less advantaged youth should be implemented by contributing to educational equality, also contribute to equality in levels of well-being.

B. Access to Shelter

Income inequality manifests itself in cities and it is observed by the social conflicts between different groups for the provisions to access to housing and basic services. Traditionally, deprivation was interpreted mainly in terms of quality of housing condition along with areas associated with poor or bad hygiene and sanitation of a neighbourhood, which are often located in inner-city streets near industrial sites, even though depending on characteristics based on the differences in location and physical characteristics of various disadvantaged neighbourhoods but their socio-demographic profiles, socioeconomic conditions and social problems are more or less similar. Predominantly the provision of an adequate number of housing along with the provision of basic amenities are major challenges and it get further exacerbated when social exclusion by certain communities make access to these facilities and thus create a hindrance for social development in a developing country like India, which is highly evident with the rise of number of slums and squatter settlements in urban areas. Houses of high income level and upper-middle-class families are spacious, built with good-quality materials with the proper built form located in neighbourhoods with good services and infrastructure facilities. On the contrary the other income level families have poor housing built form that lacks appropriate structural conditions. With some houses having single room facilities with There is congestion. Different population access to basic services and infrastructure is also divided in terms of position, status and wealth, due to these patterns, splintering urbanism is created. This segregation is reflected in the unequal allocation of basic services and infrastructure in a neighbourhood and city. In a neighbourhood there is a mixture of both income segregated groups but the interaction, sometimes become very formal sometimes like an employer and employee.

C. Demographic features of a community

Intolerance and inequity on the basis of gender, ethnicity, race, religion, or social status has lead to social exclusion, disparities and long term poverty traps. Values, norms, morals and social institutions help in strengthening the determined inequalities between groups in society. In the acute situation, these social divisions have become the basis of severe deprivation and conflicts. The scale and manifestations of gender inequality vary among all different societies that have formed to a significant amount like rules of legacy determine ownership of resources; rules of marriage, determination of women's household independence. The most sinister forms of gender inequality become visible where both legacy and marriage rules are greatly in support of men, women have a greater voice in the household than in public spaces and face fewer constraints on becoming independent economic and social actors. Usually gender norms,

morals and values leads to political, legal, economic, and also educational inequalities in the society that perpetuate women's lack of access to various resources, control over decision-making in any activity, and most importantly participation in public life.

D. Socio-political Hierarchies

Social barriers reinforced with cultural and economic inequalities make it difficult for poor people to move out of poverty. Social distinctions between groups are used to disseminate inequalities in access to material resources. These distinctions generate severe socio-political hierarchies, which represent influential social barriers clearly aimed at preserving the status of the better-off. The poor people are highly susceptible as they live on the margin of survival and are naturally at higher risk. Inflexible stratification also generates obstacles such as social inequality in villages by controlling the access to the various daily resources such as use of water as the control power is with the village elites and the most evident appearance of inequalities is to the access of land and its ownership as it really makes the poor people to rise from the agrarian hierarchy. Discrimination and the social disparity is sometimes the product of social groups with a tiny political voice as these groups are discriminated against the distribution of public goods, which leads into less access to proper education and health and thus lower income level. Poverty traps due to active discrimination, geographical isolation; lack of education creates a psychological, ethnic discrimination that persists over generation having a powerful impact on capital accumulation. Even the neighbourhood in which one lives can have a powerful influence on income and human capital. Living in a better-off neighbourhood exposes individuals to social and cultural factors that increase their productivity. Neighbourhood effects can also reduce economic mobility and widen income disparities across communities, as in Ethiopia. Similar results have been reported in industrial countries, where the rich often live apart from the rest of the population.

E. Cultural and Ritual Status

Culture defines inequalities in an apparent way by defining the actual differences between person to person's behavior, public gratitude or status of different groups, cultural norms, practices, symbols and customs. There are different aspects such as cultural discrimination, people perception and opinion about each other's culture which create exclusion, inequality that are the actual seed which germinates or causes civil wars, communal fights, ethnic and religious conflicts and are ultimately associated with political, social and economic grievances.

There are basically three main broad categories to understand Cultural ranks in inequalities and they are:

- Identification of religious practices and its observances by individuals: In multi-religious societies like India, contradictory levels of ceremonial recognition or restrictions on the observance of religious tradition, practices are often an essential source of cultural inequality. Raced, gendered, classed, and aged religious subjects occupy choices of language and expression in their presentations of self, and these choices also inherently constitute representations of other interest area or subjects along with whom they claim to associate or with whom different publics identify them.
- Linguistic Diversity: Expressing ones emotions and feelings and communicating with each other are one of the basic characteristic, the privileging of one or different languages over others often perceived as signalling, the supremacy of those for whom these languages are the mother tongue. A conflict revolving around language has always created a status and religion problem that has been notable in India since independence.
- Identification of ethno-cultural practices: The ethno-cultural is basically understanding of a person (or people) implies an awareness of the perceptions, actions, background, belief, and lifestyle choices that define that person's thoughts, feelings, and behavior. India is culturally diverse, composed of several ethno-cultural groups such as indigenous people, recent immigrants, established immigrants and their descendents, synchronized within a larger, predominant culture, and thus creating multicultural societies. People migrate across the region for a new environment, for better education for better lifestyle, for job opportunity and thus the size, diversity of ethnic mix increases. So, this association is voluntary or involuntary, temporary or permanent, these people are termed as cultural strangers in a new unfamiliar environment. The state's recognition with support for the cultural practices of various different groups is an additional vital aspect of cultural status inequalities. The most important one in these is the ethno-cultural practices and customs that are working in the functioning of the individual areas itself, which express the identity of any prominent group.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN URBAN AREA

The Urban areas are the junction of cultural, ethnic, political, monetary differentiation between two or many social groups. When the dimensions of human differentiation between two groups or individual become sensitive, discriminating them are often reflected by reinforcing spatial segregation with social exclusion that may induce criminality and social unrest. Inequality is the source of aggression, frustration, disturbance and nuisance that could augment the potential for political radicalization and unrest especially when certain groups suffer from social exclusion. The social disturbance is not mainly due to rural people, but rather the amalgamation poor people, unequal educational opportunities, access to proper shelter as well as socio economic marginalization of rural-urban migrations that are found to prompt increased levels of urban violence and criminality. In the current trend of urbanization, social inequalities merge as a major concern with respect to the development of cities and act as an extensive hurdle in the upliftment of the society. Social inequalities results in a social exclusion that not only limits people's access to resources, basic services, political and economical rights but also restricts people's participation in the city planning process in fair terms. As a major consequence of this exclusion, urban poverty is perpetuated which further make the situation worsen causing urban deprivation.

Health and education, both are considered as the major indicators of human development upon which the strength and stability of society depends. In the context of Indian cities, as a matter of concern, the quality of education provided to children varies with their social and economical status along with gender, caste and religion. Various studies had also cleared the facts that there is always a significant performance gap which lies between the highest and lowest socio-economic status of the children. Due to unequal access to good quality of education, associated with all infrastructural facilities, the results a high dropout rates in schools are comparatively higher. Some of the old custom and ritual of Indian cities, early marriage of a girl child and pregnancy also restrict girl's opportunities later in life. When coupled with food, economic crises along with urban poverty they engage with unsafe sexual activities for economic survival and thus indulging them with human trafficking and heightened risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

The annual dropout rate, in India is highest for secondary school, which indicates that although the literacy rate is higher but the level of qualification of most of its population is quite low, that further exacerbates the situations of unemployment & income inequalities including crime, delinquency and other social conflicts. Another important fact, related to educational inequality shows that there is always lies a gap between male literacy rate and female literacy rate which need to be analyzed efficiently for reducing gender disparities and biasness. In the past decade the participation of female labour force has significantly decreased by 34-27% with a wage gap of the male- female constant at 50% but GDP of India in past decade has grown around 6%. The inequalities is furthermore extremely evident from the statistic of religious minorities by providing reservation and quota in education and government employment that contributes approximately about 14% of total India's population. The ascendant graph trend of crime against women with brutal crimes like honour killing, rapes and dowry deaths is exactly opposite to the natural assumption. Growth means better education, quality of living, prosperity, equal respect to both gender, and a possible decline of socially prescribed gender roles that always hold women back.

Inadequate housing conditions are often associated with issues like physical and mental illness, stress which act as a driving force for the occurrence of crime and violence. With the lack of authorized access to affordable housing, most of the urban areas are seemed to be characterized with substandard housing facilities with temporary settlements, poor housing conditions that lack good sanitation & water supply facilities. Congested housing built forms with insufficient light and ventilation, not only hamper not only the aesthetics a neighborhood and a city but also make a distinct approach in the creation of slums, squatters' settlements along with encroachment in various public spaces of a city. However, the increasing slum population of India narrates the true story of it and thus it is always necessary to evaluate the issues with multidimensional out comes.

Gender biasness is very common and considered as basic characteristics of many Indian societies that are governed by ritual and customs. Legal systems can hold back women from becoming independent economic actors. In many countries family laws are seriously stacked against women, restricting their rights in divorce and in the legacy of land and other productive resources. In most developing countries lands are usually vested in men since the majority of the world's poor people have agriculture occupation, generally men are involved in all agricultural activities and which is the fundamental source of vulnerability for poor women. In few countries the legal system are used to formalize customary rules that unambiguously limit women's from the legacy rights and due the flagrantly unequal rights of men and women, it is difficult to create a self-governing and participatory socio-political environment of equal opportunities. Domestic violence is a very common and has been shown to be unexpectedly prevalent among people at all income levels. Inequality on the basis of gender has also very strong repercussions for human capital as bearing and rearing children falls largely on women, as deprived of basic education and decision-making power in the household creates major constraints in nurture healthy, productive children. As there is no proper family planning, they also tend to have more children against their wish, compounding the pressures on themselves and thus to their family, but on the contrary a well educated woman are able to discuss, talk with their other half about their family size decisions, and have higher aspirations for their children in terms of a healthy and better life. Low self-sufficiency for women takes an independent toll even in controlling for education, household income, and other socioeconomic characteristics, and it also is associated with higher infant and child mortality rates. Women's education plays an important role in improving child survival and also associated with better child cognitive development. More unbiased sharing of opportunities and resources between men and women also leads more directly to higher economic growth and productivity. The progress of gender quality in India is accessed through the rankings of the Gender Development Index, which is very much sub-standard in terms of reasonably fast rates of economic growth.

It is estimated that only 2% of women in developing countries own land and lack of access to land and housing. Social exclusion of women from access to land and ownership pushes them from rural areas to urban areas, and especially slums, where they often join the ranks of female-headed households. Women in rural areas become widowed or disinherited; significant numbers migrate to slums and face further discrimination from slum landlords, who consider them to be unreliable renters. As they do struggle to pay rent, women become vulnerable to sexual exploitation by landlords.

Cultural status inequalities are predominantly prone to mobilisation potentially with crime and violence as because of the inbuilt connection with group's identity and thus form both of consumer mobilisation by self-interested elites or grievance-based mobilisation on the component of underprivileged groups. Brutal socioeconomic horizontal inequalities persevere for decades without raising violent responses, changes in cultural status inequalities, which can also be a factor for group mobilisation for violence; representative events which reinforce or publicly carry out cultural status inequalities have a significant role in triggering group violence. In some cases, this may be a deliberate and cynical provocation.

The caste system in India is the most ritual status which separates people into economic and social strata from birth, reinforcing the divisions and differences since birth. Despite the periodic challenges this rigid hierarchy remained largely in place for many centuries, from social and religious reform movements. The newly independent government of India, in 1950 set out to transform the system the constitution abolished un-touch ability and making it a criminal offense for both private and public behaviour, thus empowered the government by introducing confirmatory action in employment by sinking the social and educational disadvantages faced by lower-caste people, reserving seats in parliament and state assemblies for members of scheduled (lower) castes and tribes. The process of change has been fraught with difficulties and political confrontation arose when larger shares of government sector jobs were reserved for lower caste people. By contrast, the developmental policies aimed at serving lower-caste people grow access to education for upward mobility that has been effective and less controversial, the affirmative action programs have done a great deal to lower the barriers faced by lower castes. Despite with all these complications, special efforts are needed in the many regions where an upper-caste interest still dominates the cops. Nevertheless, the experience of affirmative action in India illustrates how, with political will, the effects of long-standing patterns of discrimination can be overcome.

V. APPROACHES FOR ADDRESSING SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

Although various urban planning strategies has been implemented to counteract the issues of social inequalities like inadequate affordable housing, unavailability of infrastructural facilities and basic amenities for urban poor, uneven access to education and healthcare facilities, lack of employment opportunities but subsequently we cannot ignore the fact that cities, in Indian context always face difficulties while resolving the challenge of social conflicts that arise due to it. Hence the effective implementation of programs, policies and practices that focus on social inclusion at various level of planning is very essential.

To eliminate urban poverty and urban deprivation, urban planning policies and programs should give emphasis on the integrated approach that ensures the poor with equal access to quality education, health care facilities, housing with basic amenities. In support of the integrated approaches, urban planning strategies should focus on multidimensional aspects of poverty and consequences of urban deprivations along with its consequences, thus it should be carefully analyzed by the policy makers, simultaneously focusing on the strategies to control it in the future. In relation to this problem, new governance regimes should be designed with the involvements of stakeholders like NGOs and other third sector organizations. Along with it "URBinclusion networks" should be developed in every city that monitors the deprived urban areas and the intensity of problems associated with those areas. URBinclusion networks will provide strategic frame work for an integrated approach and inter-departmental coordination along with the involvement of local stakeholders. Coordination among various departments of municipalities and ULBs is also necessary and very important to counteract these challenges at every neighborhood & settlement level rather than only focusing on a higher level. Similarly poverty action plan of cities should be revised with a new model that delivers public policies in the perspective of social inclusion.

To ensure quality education to the entire sector of society, policy makers should think with innovative techniques which can evaluate various policies and its effectiveness to eradicate educational inequalities at different levels. The model of "IREA (Index of Regional Education advantage)" should be taken in to consideration in policy making process as it measures all the comprehensive aspects of education as well as identifies the educational disparities in regions and this model is successfully implemented in various countries to reduce educational inequalities. In city and settlement levels the effectiveness of policies should be monitored and evaluated by these indexing methods so that it will reduce the increasing dropout rates in a higher level of education and simultaneously it will control the issue of unemployment, income inequality & poverty in cities. Similarly, every educational policy should include specific guidelines that evaluate the availability of supporting infrastructures and facilities in the schools and colleges that offer education to the economically backward sector of society. Along with this gender sensitive issues should be considered as a major aspect in the preparation of policies and programs which will focus on the specific concerns and issues that a girl experience while pursuing higher education. These factors will not only fill up the gap of male-female literacy rate but at the same time it ensures no gender biasness and thus women empowerment by enhancing their quality of life and social stability.

The current housing policies are needed to be more diverse and inclusive to counteract the issues of slums and encroachments in the cities. The dynamics of affordable housing like its need, demand and shortage are needed to be evaluated at a regular time interval so that it assures the effective and practical implementations of housing policies. To combat the issues of housing shortage, night shelters are to be provided in the city that offers safety and security to the houseless population and it should be addressed in the frame work of settlement level or local area planning. Care should be taken that in various affordable housing schemes, the housing areas should be facilitated with proper light and ventilation along with basic amenities like water supply, sanitation, adequate open and green spaces that improves the mental and physical health of people by reducing the risk of various social conflicts due to frustration, stress, and anxiety. Other than that the new housing policies should focus on creating guidelines for the displaced population or migrants which would further control the formation of encroachments and informal settlements in cities.

Being important aspects of social inclusion, gender biasness and its consequences should be addressed strategically in the urban planning process. As a solution to it, "Gender Inclusive planning" approaches are to be successfully implemented in cities, that positively evaluates the gender sensitive issues and concerns in all dimensions of inequality. Besides that the negative impact of gender biasness like increasing rate of violence against women and other offensive crimes can also be addressed through effective spatial planning strategies by designing safe & inclusive streets, high density mixed used developments and thus creating a safe city with a better society with minimal space for discrimination. Socio-political stability in cities can achieve by proper legislative approach in various level of planning, ensuring people's participation in decision making process irrespective of their gender, caste, religion, and race and socio-economic status. City planning legislations should adopt legal frame work that their specific needs and concerns will be addressed by retaining their rights in the city.

VI. CONCLUSION

Social Inequality is always considered as an inerasable social problem in Indian cities but its consequences are more threatening for society and its developments if it is not examined and resolved successfully at the earliest. As social inequalities deals with various issues like socio-economical exclusion, urban poverty, income inequalities, inadequate access to shelter, gender biasness, crime & delinquencies, it needs an integrated approach of various field such as sociology, economics, urban planning for addressing those challenges. Keeping that in mind it can be concluded that urban planning policies and programs are needed to be reviewed periodically for its effective implementation. Creating safer environments in cities can include training of local authorities on gender-based policy-making and programming; collection of gender-disaggregated data on safety and security; conducting "violence against women" surveys, safety audits and exploratory walks; promoting the documentation and exchange of best practices. Thus, it also implies that the conventional urban planning approaches should reconsider the above discussed issues and challenges from a broader perspective that ensure social inclusion & stability.

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