



Sociology	Dynamics of Urbanization and repercussions on Religion- A study of Mumbai city
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Introduction:

The processes of urbanization, modernization and globalization has brought the world closer; however, at the same time it has also generated the conditions of insecurity, hegemonic power relations and greater inequalities not only among the nations, especially the developing nations but also among the people. This has no exception even for the people belonging from the most urbanised city of Mumbai.

Mumbai is the financial capital of India. Its population is heterogeneous drawing various ethnic and religious communities from different parts of India. The processes of urbanization have deeply influence each and almost every aspect of the city dwellers including religion.

The present article aims at to understand the effects of Urbanization process on religion. Hence this article is divided into three parts.

- Understanding the dynamics of urbanization process of Mumbai
- To understand the influence of the urbanization on religion
- How the urbanization process affecting religion that is to understand the major trends of religion in the most urbanised city of Mumbai.

Urbanization process of Mumbai

History of Mumbai reveals that the city consisted of seven islands namely Colaba, Mazagaon, Old Woman's Island, Wadala, Mahim, Parel, and Matunga-Sion and the people of fisherman community known as Kolis dominated the island.

Mumbai historically was ruled by Mauryas, Yadavas, Satwahanas till 12th century. Later was ruled by Muslims till 14th century. With the invasion by Portuguese in the 15th century the rule of Mughal emperors came to an end. Portuguese were impressed by the Bombay Harbour and named it Bombaim meaning Good Bay and established their hold on Mumbai

In 1661, King Charles II of England received 'Bombay' as part of the dowry; when he married Princess Catherine de Braganza of Portugal. In 1668 it was handed over to the East India Company. The British built forts, huge custom houses and other buildings in the period, but the real development and the urbanization of the city began after 1850s.

From 1850s onwards the rise in the price of American cotton resulted in increased imports of Indian cotton and this import of Indian cotton to the European countries expanded the international trade links leading the booming of textile industries owned by Europeans in Bombay. Thus, cotton industry became the prime industry that contributed to its economic prosperity which also resulted in the growth of other industries. Around 1870s Bombay Port Trust and Bombay Municipal Corporation first time ever were established in the country for the proper planning and development of the city.

The rise of mills in the city led to the massive migration of skilled and unskilled workers from the rural land, changing the appearance of the city by making it a more cosmopolitan in nature. Bombay was India's first city to experience the great economic and technological changes associated with capitalism. Cotton mill industry reached its peak in terms of employment and influence prior to the Second World War. However, as the country's independence movement began to accelerate, the domestic markets of Mumbai began to grow. Bombay was the land of Kolis Marathi speaking fishermen, Bhandaris and Aagaris developed into a leading commercial centre due to its textile mills and international trade. Later immigrants have drawn from costal Konkan area led to nearly 68% Marathi speaking community of the city.

After independence Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru came up with the planned economy making India economically self-reliant in industry as well as in agriculture in order to the growth and welfare of all the segments of society. This national policy also had its effects on the growth of Mumbai. Economic growth of India and employment growth in Bombay was good until 1950 as the city's manufacturing sector diversified (Hutchison & Brown, 2001, p. 157).

Due to socialistic policy of industrialization further led to the rise of production from the handloom and power loom sector because of their employment generating capacities. It is during this period strong union grew up (ibid, p. 158). The profits of the textile sector had been reinvested into a more diversified economic base including

chemicals, pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, consumer goods, engineering and car production.

This development further led to the expansion of the city due to its employment generation capacity. The south part of Bombay developed as a area of trade and commerce centre and also most of the government administrative offices including Mantralaya, BMC office, major Educational institutions established resulting into rise of land rates in the southern side ultimately resulting into pushing the manufacturing units towards Eastern and western suburbs. With the expansion of local railway network, the development of the suburbs intensified like shivadi, Kurla, Vikhroli, Thane as eastern suburbs and Bandra, Andheri, Saki Naka, Goregaon, Malad also further Bhayander these western suburbs became the hub of manufacturing units.

Effects of Urbanization:

The availability of employment opportunities in the various sectors attracted large scale employment opportunities. These developments lead to the large-scale migration in the city. The population growth of Mumbai shows a steep increase. In 1950 the population of Mumbai was 3,088,811, in 1975 it was 7,685,346 in 2001 it was 16,496,409 and in 2008 it is 17,650,456. This growth is mainly due to large scale migration and also due to rise of internal population resulted from rise of birth rate and increasing life expectancy rate. Rise of population led to haphazard development of city slums, lack of infra structural facilities, traffic congestion, lack of open spaces, overcrowding resulted into the Development of special plans for Mumbai in 1964 and the development of the Regional Plan in 1973. Both these plans suggested the idea of Mother city with a satellite town with a view to decentralise and reduced the burden of the city of Mumbai. However, the things started changing as government adopted the policy of Liberalization and privatization after 1992, reducing to a larger chunk of formal labours to informal labours leading towards the greater inequality, exploitation and struggle for the city dwellers.

The life of a Mumbaikar got affected tremendously due to liberalization and globalization processes. Dominated by the market economy globalization affected its citizens differently. Global capitalism led to the privatization of basic services, withdrawal of state from urban development, increasing important of public-private partnership especially in building infrastructure, increasing involvement of international financial institution in urban planning and growing exposure to a global

competitive framework. As a part of the above reconstruction , displacement of urban poor and dispossession of the disadvantaged in all possible forms have surfaced as fundamental aspects, aided by other methods of marginalisation , like closure of small-scale manufacturing and retail units ,anti-poor legal order, regulations against informal workers, hawkers , waste-pickers , privatisation of basic service like water , sanitation , housing ,health and education , and, last but not the least , restricting access to open spaces for making more and more urban areas available for elitist consumption . A belligerent urbanism is found promoted, advocating multi-scalar ‘creative destruction’ as a structural element of urban modernity (Banerjee, Guha, pg.2004).

In the words of Sujata Patel “it is not the external economy that has oriented the city to globalization; but the national policy of the government”. This policy changed the earlier programme of development – state induced social change- at an ideational level from that of balanced growth and social justice, social responsibilities and accountability, equity and self-reliance to an emphasis on private enterprise and the withdrawal of the state from welfare schemes (Patel, 2004, pp. 331-32). There are different sections of people who got affected differently by the liberalization and privatization policies. Upper and middle class took the maximum benefit of where as it is the Lower middle class and lower-class people got largely affected by these policies and economic changes.

Urbanization process and Religion

It is in this abovementioned background the present article tries to understand the impact of urbanization process on religion in the city of Mumbai. The earlier rationalistic ideas declared the demise of religion in the modern urban world. All the major classical thinkers held the position that religion will decline mainly due to its inappropriateness in the modern industrial society where science and technology would dominate and secularization will triumph. Thus, they represented the idea of secularization as opposite to the religion.

However, sociologists observes that the hypotheses that put forwarded by the rationalists is proving to be wrong. On the contrary what has been observed is that, religion by utilising the science and technology is growing very fast and is becoming the prominent feature of the urban societies. However, this growth of religion did not lead to the disappearance of the secularization in the present era on the contrary it is coexisted along with the religion. Mumbai’s population is heterogeneous drawing

various ethnic and religious communities from different parts of India. The religious practices of these communities are conspicuous through their celebrations of the festivals, ritual practices, cultic worship and symbolic expressions.

Religion is becoming more powerful in the urban conditions. As urbanization process more led to insecurities, stress and tension among the city dwellers. For them religion act as a consoler and provide the answers and explanation through religious philosophies. As put forwarded by Thomas O'Dea there are three fundamental characteristics of human existence according to O'Dea. First is that human lives in the conditions of uncertainty, events of crucial significance to his welfare and safety are beyond his precision, thus human existence is characterised by the contingency. Secondly, man's capacity to control and affect the conditions of his life, although increasing, is inherently limited characterised by powerlessness.

Third, fundamental characteristic of human existence is that societies exist amid the conditions of scarcity, and this scarcity causes the differential distribution of goods and values. These fundamental conditions of human existence create the conditions of deprivation. The religion assists men to adjust with the three brute facts of contingency, powerlessness and scarcity that lead to deprivation among human beings. Contingency or 'uncertainty context' refer to the fact that all human ventures no matter how carefully planned are liable to disappointment. Such disappointment brings deep human injury. Powerlessness or the 'impossibility context' refer to the fact that not everything man desire can be attained. Death, suffering, coercion deprives human from the satisfaction and happiness. As inherent characteristics of the human conditions, contingency and powerlessness bring men face to face with situations in which established techniques and mundane social prescription provide insufficiency for providing mechanisms for adjustment. They confront men with the 'breaking points' beyond ordinary experiences. At these breaking points in Max Weber's term 'the problem of meaning' arise. The problem of meaning arises as to the 'why?' of this unhappy aspect of our human condition. It is here the religion answers the problem of meaning by providing religious beliefs and world views by entering into the relationship with the god. (O'Dea, 1969, pp. 5, 6)

Secondly religion also provides the identity to a people in the city of Mumbai where people are multilingual, multicultural and multi religious. This striving for identity is also one of the factors responsible for the increased religiosity in the city.

People needs social bonding and religion through its ritual practices, celebrations of feast and festivals fulfil this need. Hence one can find the grand religious festival celebrations like Navratri, Celebration of Diwali or Ganesh festival among Hindus. Moharram among Muslims and Christmas celebration among Christians are celebrated on large scale.

Conclusion:

Due to urbanization the life of Mumbai people is becoming stressful owing to long working hours, lack of infrastructural facilities and constant feeling of insecurity. These conditions created by the urbanization led to the people turning more towards the religion as they consider religion as consoler. It has been found that people are more turning towards the miraculous aspect of religion. The need for social boding is also great among the people for which religion plays a major role.

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