

A Tale of Three Cities: India's Exclusionary Urbanisation

NIRANJAN SAHOO

ABSTRACT India has been witnessing rapid urbanisation in the last decade, particularly in its large and medium-size cities. As more and more people move towards cities and towns, it is imperative to build an understanding of how cities are geared in terms of growth and inclusion. In what ways do India's marginalised communities get excluded from the country's growing urban spaces? This paper studies how individuals and groups are included in—or excluded from—urban transitions. It is based on an empirical examination of inclusion in three Indian cities, part of a project of ORF with the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in Norway, and also describes the processes of exclusion that have become embedded in India's urban spaces.

INTRODUCTION

“Our urban spaces and governance mechanisms have become the theatres for political conflicts and economic struggles. ‘Exclusionary’ urbanization is benefitting certain social groups to the detriment of others, and directing resources to large metropolises depriving small and medium towns of funds needed for infrastructure and essential services”- Hamid Ansari, Vice President of India.¹

By most indications, India's future seems to be urban.² According to reliable estimates,³ the country's urban population will increase by half a billion over the next four decades (or nearly one million a month). With cities currently

contributing a mammoth 70 percent of India's GDP, there is little doubt that urban spaces will continue to grow, and for a number of reasons,⁴ among them, the economic opportunities that they offer their inhabitants. Further, for societies like India where the layers of caste and hierarchy often serve as obstacles for individual progress, cities also offer opportunities for upward mobility and assimilation. It is little wonder that India's cities receive an enormous influx of people belonging to oppressed and marginalised communities. The last decade, for example, saw an increase of 40 percent in the population of *dalits* in urban areas. Historically, too, India's

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religious minorities have been migrating to the cities in large numbers.⁵

What kind of life do these communities live in India's urban spaces? Are vulnerable communities—the religious minorities, the *dalits* and *adivasi*, the poor, the women—able to gain from the growth of cities, or are they left excluded? Do they manage to access the most basic of social services, or is such access dependent on their location, migrant status, and socio-religious identity? This paper attempts to provide answers to these and other related questions. Based on a study of three Indian cities (Pune, Ahmedabad and Varanasi), this paper examines the issues of urban exclusion in the context of access to services, or the lack of it. It opens with a review of existing literature on dominant forms of exclusion in India's urban spaces. The second section makes a detailed presentation of the empirical study, including the methodology used to uncover trends of exclusion in the three subject cities. The findings of the study are discussed in the third section, and the paper concludes with a description of the broad patterns that can be culled from the study, as well as raises questions for further research.

URBAN EXCLUSION IN INDIA: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The City can be said to be a leveller: It offers the ideal conditions for the breakdown of rigid social structures that tend to discriminate against the marginalised.⁶ This is true for India, a society that is highly stratified. Calling attention to the transformative potential of cities and towns, Babasaheb Ambedkar, dalit icon and a key architect of the Indian Constitution, exhorted his fellow dalits to leave the “narrow-minded” villages for city life.⁷ In contemporary Indian history, cities which have witnessed a relative surge of populations belonging to traditionally marginalised communities have provided these immigrants with some chance of social mobility, greater than what they could have perhaps hoped for in their native village. A number of recent studies argue that the 'anonymity' that is accorded by the city has helped dalits, for

example, in overcoming the social disadvantages and prejudices they were born to—in their walk up the social and economic ladder.⁸

While there may be enough evidence to prove such claims of the city's potential for social integration and economic opportunity, other recent studies point to contrary trends about caste-based segregation and exclusion in urban spaces. In many ways, these studies say, cities in India increasingly mirror the rural social and cultural realities that poor immigrants are wanting to escape. According to Vithayathil and Singh (2012), accelerated urbanisation (particularly in medium and large cities), globalisation, transformations in employment structures—these have not aided to a significant degree in the dismantling of deep social and ethnic divides known to Indian society.⁹ Indeed, spatial segregation by caste and socio-economic reasons are seen to be on the rise in many Indian cities. A more recent study by Sidhwani (2015) found stronger trends of spatial segregation in all major Indian cities.¹⁰

Yet the trends of rising spatial exclusion in urban spaces is not based on caste alone. Residential segregation by religion—particularly in the case of Muslims—is a growing phenomenon in most large and medium cities which are already saddled with a history of communalism.¹¹ According to Mahadevia (2002), the process of urban exclusion, earlier segmented on the basis of class, was now happening on the basis of religion.¹² Moreover, these socio-religious disadvantaged populations are still heavily concentrated in certain geographies of a city, mostly overpopulating slums and the poorest neighbourhoods; with higher population density and segregated populations come various negative consequences.¹³ The very location of slum colonies has a direct impact on the access to municipal services. Compared to families with similar socio-economic characteristics living in the inner parts of a city, squatter communities in the peripheries receive little municipal services, if at all, such as drinking water, sanitation, education, healthcare, and food stamps.¹⁴ Robust evidence exist establishing a direct correlation

between increasing distance from the cities and higher incidence of poverty.¹⁵

This paper collects detailed information on spatiality and exclusionary dynamics in select neighbourhoods in three Indian cities. While the study is largely a followup to several preceding studies (Vithayathil and Singh, 2012; and Sidhawani, 2015), it has also gone a step further. To get a deeper view of exclusionary dynamics, this present work opted for household surveys backed by stakeholder analyses. Care has been taken to understand exclusion from the point of view of migrant and poorer inhabitants as well. The household survey was carefully designed to capture these relevant dimensions.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data for this paper were gathered between February and June 2014 as part of a larger study on “Urbanisation, Exclusion and Climate Change”¹⁶ that takes a comprehensive look at India's current pace of urbanisation and finds an understanding of the dynamics facilitating exclusion (or inclusion) in the three Indian cities of Pune,¹⁷ Varanasi,¹⁸ and Ahmedabad.¹⁹ Using a *mixed method approach*,²⁰ the study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to gather data. In the quantitative part, a household survey was conducted among 300 respondents (heads of household) from each city using the random sampling method. Using a scheduled questionnaire on a range of issues—from income to migration history, to level of participation in civic activities and urban governance processes—the survey covered three slums²¹ or informal settlements in each city (see Annex for details on the subject slum communities.) Considering that the slum may be regarded as the most apt symbol for urban exclusion,²² this study chose slum communities of various population mix (poorest, migrants, majority-Hindu, majority-Muslim, mixed population, or peripheral location) to understand the intensity and the dynamics of exclusion faced by the residents.

The household survey was complemented by qualitative data culled through observation and

in-depth interviews with officials, slum dwellers, local NGOs, community leaders, elected representatives, and urban experts from the cities themselves. Importantly, a series of focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted from among the chosen slum areas. Other than the primary data, significant amounts of information were also collated from secondary sources such as census reports, caste census, plan documents, articles, and news reports. Overall, the study paid close attention to understand the dynamics of exclusion, linking them to various parameters such as household income, socio-religious identity, migration history, to level of participation in civic activities and urban governance processes. It is the aim of this present work to aid urban planners and other scholars in building the knowledge base on this highly relevant yet understudied field.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

While the broad conclusions of the study cannot be extrapolated to apply to every Indian city, they nonetheless present various lessons for the country's urban planners and policymakers. The following sections describe the study's findings.

Spatial Segregation Trends

The poorest neighbourhoods in the surveyed cities are largely overpopulated by residents belonging to dalits, adivasi and Muslims (See Graph 1). The findings reinforce those of some other earlier studies by Kundu (2011)²³ and Sidhwani (2015). What is more important to note here is that residential segregation based on socio-economic status has plenty of consequences for its inhabitants. For example, the location of slums or squatter colonies has a direct bearing on the levels of municipal services that these residents are able to access. Compared to their counterparts with similar socio-economic characteristics in the inner parts of a city, families living in informal settlements located in the city's margins were found to be receiving inadequate municipal services such as drinking water, sanitation, education, healthcare, and food stamps. This

finding echoes a pattern that has been established earlier by other scholarly work on the concept of 'locational disadvantage'.²⁴ However, a great deal of spatial disadvantages in terms of municipal services is linked to the strength of municipal governance system of a particular city. For instance, while residents of Rajghat, a neighbourhood in the fringe of Varanasi, barely receive municipal services (sanitation, water, health), Annabhau Sathe, a squatter colony in Pune, was receiving most of the basic municipal services. Pune's relative strength in municipal governance—which came out quite clearly in this study's stakeholders' analysis—seems to be the critical factor in bringing better outcomes for the residents of peripheral Annabhau Sathe.

Identity and Exclusion

The location of the community, or the presence of a strong municipal government, are not the only determinants in ensuring access to basic urban services. As gathered by this study, the neighbourhoods located in the middle of Varanasi and Ahmedabad were not in any significant way better-off than the ones located in the peripheries. A deeper probe revealed that often, the socio-religious characteristics of a slum or neighbourhood also determine access to municipal services.

For example, settlements with large Muslim populations and those with large communities of new immigrants face higher degrees of discrimination and institutionalised apathy when it comes to the delivery of basic services. To provide an illustration, between two close-by neighbourhoods of Juhapura, a predominantly Muslim ghetto and Yogeshwar Nagar (under Vasna settlement), an overwhelming Hindu settlement in Ahmedabad, this study found that the former was receiving municipal services such as the building of roads and drainage systems, and sanitation, education and drinking water. Similar trends were observed in the case of Varanasi. A necessary caveat is that while this pattern was observed in Ahmedabad and Varanasi (both cities with long communal history), it cannot be extrapolated for every Indian city. At the least,

this finding which points to the existence of identity-based exclusion in cities with long communal history (while the same serves inclusion for others) could serve as a wakeup call for the country's urban planners and policymakers in overseeing the goals of inclusive urbanisation.

The exclusionary processes take a slightly different turn when it comes to migrants. While all migrants face various disadvantages in a city,²⁵ it is much more severe in the case of new migrants (See Graph 3). Irrespective of their identities or socio-religious characteristics, nearly all new migrants face exclusionary barriers in cities for a wide variety of reasons. For example, new migrants in the surveyed cities complain of having little or no access to critical municipal services such as food stamps and social welfare schemes, due to their lack of requisite documents such as proofs of residence and identity. As has been found by a number of earlier studies of Indian slums,²⁶ the most important passport to inclusion for migrant populations in cities is the possession of official documents such as PAN card, bank accounts, utility bills, voter IDs, and Aadhaar card. Other hurdles bar their access: Based on this study (both the household survey and the author's consultations with municipal officials and city-based NGOs), there are social and institutional aspects to exclusion as far as new migrants are concerned. For instance, as they are unfamiliar with the local leaders and elected representatives in their city, they not only fail to register their grievances with these officials but, more importantly, they remain unaware of the processes for obtaining the necessary documents and navigating the bureaucracy.

Overall, migrant populations face obstacles related to the resentment harboured by the older residents in their new city. These residents view the new migrants as threats, as unwelcome competitors for jobs and public goods, both of which are already scarce, to begin with. For example, Maharashtra, and Pune in particular, has seen the spurt of resistance to "outsiders" through the slogans trumpeting "sons of soil"—the called by Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS)²⁷ and leading to the targeting of, and


violent attacks against migrants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Thus, the politicisation of India's urban spaces—often for vote-bank populism—not only creates exclusionary barriers for new migrants but is also fuelling their gradual disenfranchisement, even with dangerous consequences.²⁸ Indeed, what is at stake is *citizenship* for thousands of migrants who seek to enter cities in search of a better life.

CONCLUSION

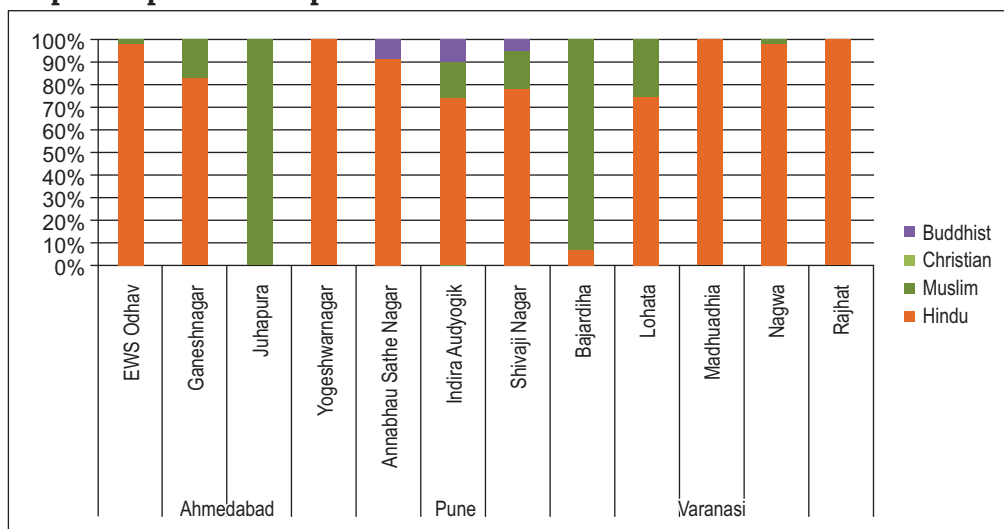
This study sought to understand the dynamics and processes of exclusion in three Indian cities, paying close attention to various indicators such as household income, socio-religious identity, migration history, issues of access, level of participation by residents in civic activities, and responses of municipal governance institutions. In the process, the study gathered useful insights about the ongoing urbanisation in India. While the conclusions drawn by the study cannot be extrapolated to apply to other cities of India—regardless of their size, demographics, and other characteristics—these are important insights for urban planners and other stakeholders who are grappling with the complexities of Indian urbanisation.

First, far from being a “melting pot” and harbingers of social mobility, the cities studied for this paper increasingly resemble their rural counterparts. There is a growing trend of

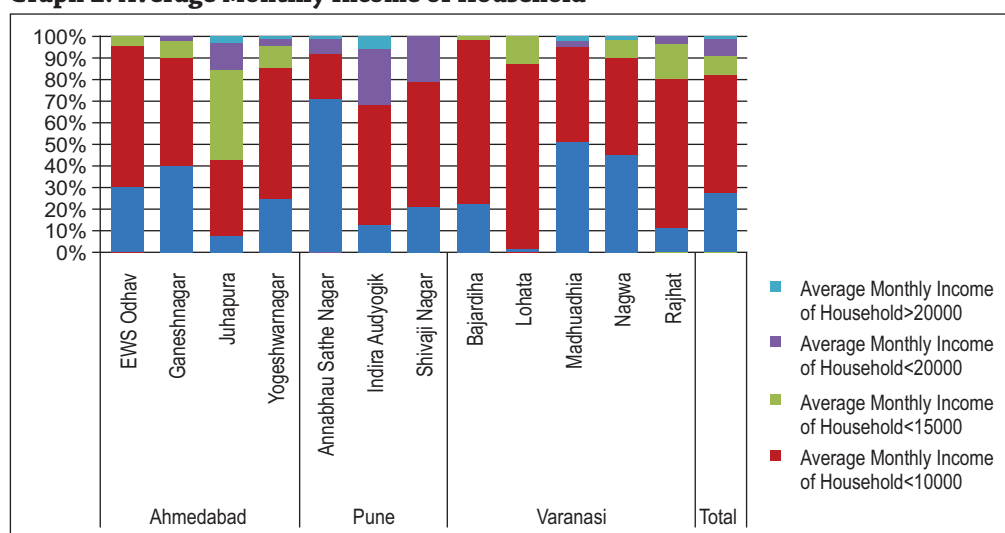
residential segregation by caste, religion, and socio-economic characteristics. Slums or informal settlements known for poverty, squalor and extreme forms of exclusion are largely populated by the most marginalised of populations such as dalits, adivasi and Muslims. Second, while the location of a neighbourhood significantly determines the levels of access to municipal services, the critical element in bridging the gaps is the strength of urban governance institutions. The third and highly worrisome trend is that socio-economic characteristics, or the identity of a neighbourhood, do exert an influence on the extent of access to municipal services. These trends are most visible in cities with long histories of communal conflict. Finally, exclusionary processes in cities are being played out in complex ways, particularly in the case of migrant populations. While all migrants meet with some form of exclusion or another, recent migrants face exclusion more severely. Further, the migrants and their ability to access key public provisions are increasingly being linked to democratic politics that often goes against the inclusionary vision of a city.

As things stand, India's ongoing urbanisation offers little opportunity for inclusion for its disadvantaged populations particularly the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, religious minorities, and new migrants. India is still a far cry from making its cities an inclusionary platform for greater social mobility. 

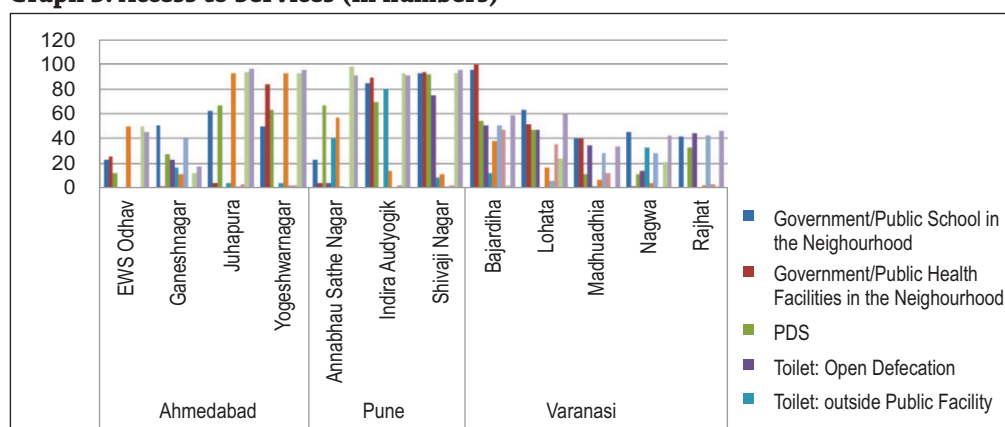
Graph 1: Population Composition and Characteristics



Graph 2: Average Monthly Income of Household



Graph 3: Access to Services (in numbers)



Annex.: Localities identified for survey and selection criteria

Name of City	Name of Slum (Basti)	Reasons for Selection	Special Characteristics of Locality
Ahmedabad	1 Yogeshwar Nagar (100)	Typical consolidated unauthorized colony (slum)	Mostly Hindu with significant migrant and rentier population
	2 Juhapura (100)	Muslim ghetto which faces major exclusionary barriers and violent conflicts	Economically mixed population; important for the AHM-narrative in terms of intra-urban mobility and segregation
	3 Ganesh Nagar (50)	Transition camp for displaced / evicted slum-dwellers	Extreme peripheral location; no basic facilities; the poorest of poor
	4 Odhav (50)	Public EWS-housing for displaced slum-dwellers; difference in legal and socio-economic terms to those left in the transition camp; public urban expansion	Peripheral location but close to major industrial area; poor maintenance and low occupancy
Pune	1 Annabhau Sathe (100)		Mixed population; fringe location; farm workers, scrap dealers
	2 Indira Audyogik Vasahat (100)		Core location; other details not yet available
	3 Shivaji Nagar (100)		Mixed population including Muslims, migrants from Karnataka; core location
Varanasi	1Bajardiha (100 samples)	A Muslim ghetto, one of the poorest localities in Varanasi	Mostly poor weavers (famous Benarasi silk saree). Has experienced bouts of communal conflicts/riots in the past.
	2 Nagwa (50)	Mostly Hindus (lower castes)	Inhabitants of Basti living around the sewerage canal, have no basic provisions and vulnerable to eviction
	3 Marwada Badi (50)	Mixed population (lower caste Hindus)	One of the most vulnerable and poorest populations living around railway station, with no legal jurisdiction (centre-state dispute over land); have no access to public services including water.
	4 Rajghat (50)	Slum located in the outskirts (around the Ganges) with extreme poverty and exclusion	Mixed population (mostly migrants) that receives little or no attention from the municipal agencies. Extreme form of exclusion and are most vulnerable.
	5 Lohata (50)	Peripheral slum characterised by extreme poverty and exclusion	Mostly migrant population (lower caste, Rohingya, Musahar tribe); face all forms of exclusion from state and institutions

ENDNOTES:

1. Yusuf Meherally Memorial Lecture at Mumbai, 23 September 2011, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erecontent.aspx?relid=76201>
2. The phase has been borrowed from The Economist (22 May 2015), see: <http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21651324-indias-future-urban-let-there-be-concrete>
3. Estimates from the CASI report: <https://casi.sas.upenn.edu/india%E2%80%99s-urban-future/india%E2%80%99s-urban-future>
4. See McKinsey Report on Indian Urbanization (2010), <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/urbanization/urban-awakening-in-india>
5. An impressive 40% of Muslims and Christians live in urban areas. See Census of India 2011, http://censusindia.gov.in/Ad_Campaign/drop_in_articles/04-Distribution_by_Religion.pdf
6. City's transformative potentials were documented by Louis Wirth as early as 1938. See Wirth Louis, *Urbanism as a Way of Life*, *American Journal of Sociology*, 1938.
7. This statement was made by Ambedkar during his dwell with MK Gandhi on issues of untouchability and affirmative action for Dalits. See Gyanendra Pandey, *The Time of Dalit Conversion*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLI, No.18, May 6, 2006.
8. For a comprehensive view, see Sonalde Desai and Amaresh Dubey, *Caste in 21st Century Indian: Competing Narratives*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 46 (11), March 12, 2012.
9. For a comprehensive analysis of spatial segregation by caste, see Trina Vithayathil and Gayatri Singh, *Spaces of Discrimination : Residential Segregation in the Indian Cities*", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVII, No. 37, September, 2012.
10. Sidhwani, Pranav, *Spatial Inequalities in Big Indian Cities*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. L, No. 22, May 30, 2015.
11. See Joyita Ghose, *Muslim Neighbourhoods and Segregation in the City*, Urban Policies and the Right to the City in India: Rights, Responsibilities and Citizenship, UNESCO, 2011, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002146/214602e.pdf>
12. Darshini Mahadevia, *Communal Space over Life Space: Saga of Increasing Vulnerability in Ahmedabad*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37(48), January 2002.
13. See Census of India 2011
14. See World Development Report 2009. http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/12/03/000333038_20081203234958/Rendered/PDF/437380REVISED01BLIC1097808213760720.pdf
15. These are due to diminishing work opportunities, more expenses in travelling, lack of basic amenities and so on. See Peter Lanjouw and Rinku Murgai : *Urban Growth and rural Poverty in India*, The World Bank, 2010, http://www.rimisp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Paper_Peter_Lanjouw-4.pdf
16. For more information about the joint project, see the link: <https://www.prio.org/Projects/Project/?x=1571>
17. Called the Oxford of East, Pune is the second largest city of Maharashtra after Mumbai. With a population over 5.9 million, Pune attracts a large number of migrants populations from all across India. Known for its educational facilities and relative prosperity, Pune houses well-established manufacturing, and forging industries since the 1950-60s. The city has also emerged as a major ITES hub in India.
18. Varanasi, once known as Benares or Banaras and Kashi, is a historical city in northern India. The city is sacred to Hindus and Jains and also one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, with settlements dating back to the 11th century BC. With over 1.3 million population (substantial Muslim population), Varanasi city has been on the throes of communal riots and known for poor civic administration.
19. Located in the western India, Ahmedabad city houses more than six million population. One of the fastest growing cities in the world, Ahmedabad has achieved dramatic success in economic development and improving urban amenities (especially public transportation) in the last decades. Given its growth and job opportunities, the city attracts thousands of migrant populations from all corners of India. The city has a long communal history as well.
20. We followed mixed method pioneered by John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approach*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.
21. However, we chose to add one more neighbourhood each in Varanasi and Ahmedabad to explore more diverse responses on the issues of migration and spatiality. We split the respondents to 50 each in those neighbourhoods.

22. See Raymond J. Struyk, Slums: Ultimate urban Exclusion, *Seminar*, No. 635, 2012, http://www.india-seminar.com/2012/635/635_raymond_j_struyk.htm
23. Amitabh Kundu, The Trends and Processes of urbanization in India, Human Settlements Group International *Institute for Environment and Development and United Nations Population Fund*, 2011. <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/10597IIED.pdf>
24. See World Development Report 2009. http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/12/03/000333038_20081203234958/Rendered/PDF/437380REVISED01BLIC1097808213760720.pdf
25. Major issues migrants especially the ones coming from sections belonging to lower socio-economic backgrounds with lower education and skills face problems of finding housing among other. For a perceptive analysis of Indian situation read Parvin Sultana, "Urbanisation and Exclusion: The case of Indian Cities", *Urban Panorama*, Jan-June 2013, link: https://www.academia.edu/10153847/Urbanisation_and_Exclusion_The_Case_of_Indian_Cities
26. See UNESCO Policy Brief "For a better Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India, 2012, Link: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/New_Delhi/pdf/Policy_briefs_full_low_01.pdf, also see Preeti Mann, Urbanisation, Migration and Exclusion in India, CASI Paper, 2013, link: <https://casi.sas.upenn.edu/iit/mann>
27. Playing on the anxiety and insecurity of majority Maratha (people belonging to state of Maharashtra), the MNS blames Bihari migrants for many local urban problems, arguing for discriminatory policies that create a substantial vote bank of single-issue anti-Bihari voters. With manufacturing and service sectors tumbling and high-paying jobs perceived to now be scarcer in big metropolis such as Mumbai, the 'locals' who once shunned low-end jobs are now competing with migrants or so-called "outsiders". Many state level politicians have used these dynamics to their political advantage. See Jason Miklian and Niranjana Sahoo PRIO Policy Brief No. 3, 2016, see link: http://file.prio.no/publication_files/prio/Milkian,%20Sahoo%20-%20Supporting%20a%20More%20Inclusive%20and%20Responsive%20Urban%20India,%20PRIO%20Policy%20Brief%203-2016.pdf
28. Ibid, p3
29. Household samples size.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Niranjana Sahoo is a Senior Fellow with ORF, specialising in issues of public policy, governance and political reforms, human rights, and insurgency.



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20, Rouse Avenue Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110 002, INDIA
Ph. : +91-11-43520020, 30220020. Fax : +91-11-43520003, 23210773
E-mail: contactus@orfonline.org
Website: www.orfonline.org