

# The Reshaping of Mumbai, Whose city is it?

In the context of the problems of the current form of development of Mumbai, it would be worthwhile to get some insight into its recent history in the 50th year of the formation of Maharashtra state with Mumbai as the capital.

A spectacular display of fireworks and a multi media laser show was held on three km of Marine Drive in Mumbai on May 1 in 2010 to celebrate the historic occasion. It was an irony that the Congress government was celebrating the event with such gusto. The Congress party actually had consistently opposed the inclusion of Mumbai in Maharashtra state. But sensing the overwhelming tide of opinion, the Congress had yielded to the demand and then claimed credit for the formation of the state.

Pitched battles spread over several months in 1955-56 were fought between the common people and the police over the people's struggle for the right to the city. There was a mass upsurge over the proposal to separate Mumbai from the then Bombay state comprising of Maharashtra and Gujarat and make it an independent, centrally administered city. There were violent demonstrations in which workers, students, farmers and even businessmen joined.

The agitation continued vigorously even after 106 people were killed in police firing and many were injured on the streets of Mumbai. Marathi regional and linguistic aspirations did play their part in the agitation but the vision was essentially one of creating a socialistic state including Mumbai. Mumbai was the focal point. The agitation

was led by veteran Communist S.A. Dange, socialist S.M. Joshi, and Acharya Atre, a reputed literary figure and crusading journalist with a mass appeal.

There was also considerable support from other linguistic groups and among the major leaders of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti in Mumbai were Nausher Bharucha and Moinuddin Harris. The upsurge was so strong that Naosherwan Satha, a left-wing member of the minority Parsi community, could get elected to the assembly from Srigonda a completely rural constituency in Ahmednagar district.

Nehru wanted a city state of Bombay and he was frustrated by the near-universal opposition including from his own daughter Indira Gandhi, wrote Inder Malhotra, eminent political commentator (Indian Express 3-5-2010).

Nehru's normally apolitical finance minister C.D. Deshmukh resigned in protest against the proposal and in an angry statement accused the government of surrendering to the moneybags of Bombay. Nehru hit back 'We are the children of revolution. Let no one talk about moneybags to us.'

This exchange between the two leaders is really the crux. The popular agitation won the demand for Mumbai as the capital of Maharashtra but the vision of a socialist Mumbai is completely shattered. Mumbai is far wealthier than in the fifties but far more unequal and it is now far more under the control of big business. Nehru was a great visionary but his vision too has received big blow, especially in Mumbai. All major parties

are now complicit in the role of big money in politics. The Shiv Sena and the breakaway Maharashtra Navanirman Sena accused each other in June this year of making big money in the horse trading of their MLAs in the election to the Maharashtra legislative council.

The Shiv Sena, criticised by some for its fascist, medieval and pro-capitalist outlook, played a significant role in changing the political and economic face of Mumbai, with the murder of the sitting Communist MLA Krishna Desai in Parel in June, 1970 by Shiv Sainiks. It was an open secret that in those days the Sena was backed by the Congress and big business.

This paved the way for wresting control of Mumbai from the working people. And just as Paris was reshaped after the defeat of the Communist uprising in the 19th century and New York underwent its most controversial urban renewal after World War II, Mumbai is being reshaped now completely.

Urban renewal is the cornerstone of the central government's vision for urbanisation. There is apparently little realisation that in the countries where it has been going on for a long time, urban renewal conjures up the worst visions of the worst misadventures of post war planning as Samuel Zipp points out in his recently published book 'Manhattan Projects: the rise and fall of urban renewal in cold war New York.' After the war New York had become the top city in the world but it was dominated by a vast swath of depressed tenements. And these had to go as part of the take over of the city by big business.

The media in Mumbai is now dominated by reports and advertisements about real estate developments and a phenomenal rise in luxury housing amidst an unprecedented housing shortage for ordinary people.

A full page advertisement in the Times of India, Mumbai, of June 19 in 2010 boasted a high rise luxury building in Prabhadevi with three swimming pools and some 17 floors for car parking. This was after Mumbai experienced its most severe water shortage. Just a month earlier there was a scramble for relatively low cost housing with 317,000 people applying for just 3449 flats of the Maharashtra housing and area development authority. The fate was decided through a massive draw of lots, a lottery.

The poor are now being evicted and several landmarks are being demolished to make way for luxury housing and commercial establishments. Even the Dalvi building in Parel, the headquarters of the Communist party in Mumbai for decades has been demolished. One of the last remnants of the left-wing past is the Leningrad Chowk at Prabhadevi and the building of the Lok Vangmay Griha, a centre of left wing publishing and cultural activity. It is one of the few places in Mumbai where one can hear people discussing the works of the likes of Pablo Neruda, Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet, Satyajit Ray and Tolstoy. It is ironical that just across the road near this left-wing centre has come up a show-room of the car Volkswagen, a brand inextricably linked with Hitler and fascism. That much of this new development rides roughshod

over common people is obvious in many ways. The footpath outside this showroom is deliberately turned into slope for the benefit of cars and to the detriment of pedestrians. And this kind of intrusion into pedestrian space is committed by tens of thousands of buildings in Mumbai with the municipal corporation turning a blind eye. The BMC may note that the Bloomberg administration in New York has begun a drive against such intrusions even though the menace there is on a much smaller scale. The Volkswagen show room stands right opposite Rachana Sansad, a well known architecture institute. The showroom along with many other buildings in the neighbourhood would provide excellent casebook studies of the assault on the cityscape and streetscape.

The adjoining Ravindra Natya Mandir has been redeveloped by the Maharashtra government in such a way that the cultural centre in memory of Tagore is completely dwarfed by a building of the ICICI in the same premises. The redevelopment was carried out in the name of creating a Kala Akademi for promotion of arts but it has remained on paper. No prizes for guessing who benefits through such redevelopment.

In the next plot the formerly humble-looking Siddhi Vinayak temple has been redeveloped into a swanky structure and this has paid rich dividends. It is now a big money spinner, next only to the Sai Baba temple in Shirdi in Maharashtra. The temple has also brazenly occupied a large portion of the busy road outside. And elsewhere, the civic administration seeks to acquire the land of churches and Parsi agiaries for road widening. The long-winding and sometimes night-long

queues outside the temple show the increasing sense of helplessness citizens worn down by the daily grind of living. Mumbai was a much more rational city earlier and people had confidence that they could change things for the better.

The once proud working class culture in the textile mill district has vanished and is replaced by what has come to be known as Rada culture of rioting and display of muscle power. A part of this culture was nurtured by the industrial sector as a weapon against trade union power.

Streets were more accessible to people for morchas and demonstrations. Reputed poet Narayan Surve has written a lot on how the streets served as his university and where he learnt of Karl Marx and Shelley and Shakespeare in the street processions.

Democratic space is shrinking rapidly. Upper class residents' associations are now demanding a ban on holding political rallies at Shivaji Park which has played a crucial role in the democratic struggle of Mumbai. The main problem is that the rising middle class is afraid of common people coming together.

One can experience the city and such changes mainly through walking, not from the comfort of the air conditioned car or luxurious high rise buildings. Walking is also seen by many urban thinkers like Certeu and Debord as an act with a great potential to challenge the system because a pedestrian is autonomous, he or she in a sense can penetrate more areas than a car possibly can. Perhaps that is why pedestrians continue to be humiliated

in Mumbai at every step through acts of commission or omission of the city builders. Mr J.B. D'souza, former municipal commissioner of Mumbai and one of the few sane voices in urban thinking, used to say that there appeared to be a conspiracy against pedestrians.

I happened to cross the road outside Shiv Sena Bhavan last June. It happened to be the anniversary of the Sena. As usual it was hazardous to walk at the pedestrian crossing even with the light turning green as vehicles continued to come menacingly with police silently watching the scene. Worse, a cloth banner proclaiming the birthday of an MLA blocked the footpath at the Kohinoor Mill end forcing pedestrians to bend low. A lady with back trouble was in tears. Next, they would expect you to not just to bend but to crawl. More is the irony considering that Marathi speaking people have prided themselves on being fiercely independent and so there is the oft quoted the saying 'I would rather break than bend.'

The Shiv Sena-led administration in the city municipal corporation did its best to try to construct an underground passage at this pivotal junction forcing pedestrians to go up and down. But the move was foiled by alert citizens through sit-ins. The idea of the civic body and builder lobby was to facilitate movement of cars, especially to suit the interests of a massive luxury complex coming up in the sprawling Kohinoor mill land opposite Sena Bhavan promoted by leaders of the Shiv Sena and the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena. Money makes strange bedfellows. Such underground tunnels and skywalks are touted as facilities for pedestrians but actually cause

pedestrians extreme inconvenience, as pointed out by experts from the Central Road Research Institute, New Delhi.

Besides, it appears that some of these projects are also at least partially motivated by the interests of advertisers and are intended to create more space for shops in the garb of providing facilities for pedestrians. The authorities waned to build shops on the skyways and put up hoardings but gave up the move following a public outcry. Besides, the hoardings would block the view of the pedestrians and the closed space would be insecure for women. I found the recently constructed skywalk in Bandra west extremely hazardous. It is not a death trap but it can lead to a slide to death. The surface is slippery and unless one is extraordinarily careful one could easily slip through the wide gaps and crash into the heavy traffic several feet below.

There is constant talk of providing world class amenities when in practice the most inconvenient and humiliating condition are imposed on people in public spaces, bus stops, railway stations and government buildings. They are now talking of building 50 air conditioned bus stops with ATM (automated teller machines) as well as cold drink and snack vending machines. One can imagine for whom actually these amenities are intended. This sounds hypocritical especially when bus commuters are denied the even proper displays of bus numbers and routes. All that people need are spacious spaces where they can comfortably sit and stand. What we now have in the form of shining steel bus stops are torturous cages precarious to stand or sit.

Instead of providing amenities to BEST bus commuters at municipal BEST depots, the administration is selling precious, scarce land of the depots and now they are even planning to use the depots as bases for landing and take off of helicopters for the affluent. Common people's needs are low on the agenda. Instead of performing its basic tasks the municipal corporation is obsessed with allocating more and more land for car parking. The city is losing vital public space for a measly sum charged for car parking. And even less money reaches the civic body because of leakages. Mercifully, the central environment ministry has opposed the use of terraces of high rise buildings as helipads.

To watch the most glaring disparity in transport one has to just step outside the arrival lounge of the Sahar international airport. Stepping out from the arrival area itself can be hazardous because poor planning ensures that one is suddenly confronted by car traffic. There is an imposing high rise with parking facilities for thousands of cars where the vehicles are very well sheltered. There are two bus stops and one does not even have a shelter. At the other bus stop there is space for not more than ten people to sit down.

This humiliation was easily avoidable with a little planning. Chennai has an excellent local train connection to the international airport. One can reach Trisulam station near the airport from Chennai Central station for just Rs six. In Colombo there is a free bus facility from the airport to a bus stand five minutes away where you can get a bus to different corners of the country.

Politicians and bureaucrats, harping on the theme of world class projects, conspicuously ignore pro-people facilities provided in cities like London, Curitiba, Paris and New York which are providing more amenities for walking, cycling and public transport. The U.S. secretary for transport Ray LaHood has directed that equal importance should be given in projects for cycling and walking, as equal as for cars. He joined a Walk to School programme with children in his family recently.

In Mumbai it is left to private initiatives to think of alternative means of transport. The Vaze Kelkar College in Mulund is getting good response from its students for renting out of bicycles and bicycle parking facilities have been provided near Mulund railway station.

Mumbai generates a huge surplus but this is being used mainly for luxury and consumption while essentials amenities like fire brigade, schools, sanitation and hospitals are starved of funds. A right to information query by activist Aftab Siddiqui revealed that one municipal ward 95 alone has 36 beer bars, pubs and discotheques in the Bandra Khar area. There are 14 night spots in a radius of half a km. Many of them are without licences and are a great nuisance to residents. There is also a booming sex industry in Mumbai which is very visible and clandestine at the same time. Even respectable newspapers are now full of hundreds of advertisements with photographs of women offering friendship, comfort and escort. College girls are openly offered opportunity to make thousands of rupees a month. The operators of these friendship clubs

obviously don't even need any space of their own as their deals are facilitated by the booming cell phone industry.

The inadequate facilities for fire fighting in Mumbai shocked Thomas Essen, New York's fire commissioner during 9/11, when he visited the city. The city needs at least 250 fire stations while it has only 33 now. And the job of firemen is becoming increasingly difficult as high rises come up flouting all fire safety norms. Civic corruption may have reached dizzying heights.

The rise of five star hospitals, where you can't enter without a fat bank balance, is contrasted by the deteriorating state of municipal and government hospitals once known for their highly committed doctors and excellent health services. This has a disastrous impact on the poor who really need basic services because they have genuine health problems in contrast to self-generated health problems created by upper class through with their lifestyle.

There is a mushrooming of art galleries in the city but Mumbai's aesthetic sense would be much better with proper sanitation. A good sewer is far nobler and holier than the most admired Madonna ever painted, declared John Ruskin, the eminent British art critic and social thinker of the 19th century. Posh new multiplex cinema theatres and shopping arcades exist side by side with filthy open nullahs. It is not just the Mithi River which remains dark and dirty despite proclaimed efforts to clean it. Obviously, a lot of money is literally going down the drain. There are many other drainage outlets like that. Many workers

# For Mumbai, boys still the chosen ones

## No Improvement In Girl-To-Boy Ratio Over Past 5 Years; Census Unlikely To Paint Better Picture

Pratibha Masand | 78

Mumbai: Going by the trend of recent years, the impending census could expose an ugly truth about Mumbai: the city has reportedly missed the girl child.

The previous census, of 2001, showed that Mumbai had 923 girls aged upto six years for every 1,000 boys in the same age group. Since then the ratio has shown no improvement. In 2006, the number of girls per 1,000 boys dipped to 917, according to BMC statistics based on births registered. In 2006, 2007 and 2008, the BMC figures remained at a dismal 920, 921 and 918, respectively. The latest figures show that Mumbai had 919 girls born for every 1,000 male births in 2009.

Mumbai lags behind the national average. The 2001 census showed 934 girls for every 1,000 boys in the country.

Su, where are the missing girls? The question hurls one into a murky world where the educated and more affluent are suspected to be using contraceptives and technological advances to ensure male children, and poorer, relatively uneducated people are clinging to age-old attitudes, which include having males to be breadwinners and carry on the family name.

Ironically, the positive aspects of Mumbai, such as literacy and affluence, appear to be major reasons contributing to the skewed child sex ratio. "With the more educated strata, there is a pos-

sibility of 'stopping rule behaviour'—a term that means a couple has decided to have only one child, and so would prefer a boy," said Dr Aranya Swamy, of the International Institute of Population Sciences.

Also, low fertility rates should be taken into account. With most affluent, educated people marrying late and having a baby even later, the fertility rate for the higher economic strata is around 1.5, which means that

the more affluent, educated, liberal and more techno-savvy and have more contraceptive options. They know that an abortion is possible if they want it and can pay for it," said Daver.

City pockets that had the lowest ratios for girls in 2009 were wards known for their upmarket areas, while they also have a healthy mix of middle- and lower-middle residents and slums. A (Colaba) Churchgate, Fort had only 867 girl births per 1,000 boys. C (Marine Lines, Mumbai), Marine Drive had just 854 girl births and G-South (Worli, Dadar) had 871.

Interestingly, no ward had more girls than boys. That statistic was last seen in 2006. The highest ratio for girls was in B (Masjid Bunder, JJ Road), which had 966 girls, and H-West (Bandra, Khar, Santa Cruz), which had 943.

A. I. Sharda, of Population First, an NGO, said one would have to wait for the 6th census for a clearer picture. "When the data is collected for births registered on a yearly basis, the statistics are only a rough indication. A proper analysis can be done only when the census collects data for the zero-to-six age group," she said.



around 50% of people in this group are able to have only one child," said Swamy.

# Census exercise hit by roadblocks

Sandeep Ashar

Nine days after the census exercise began in Mumbai, teething problems continue to bog down the most census takers. Several enumerators do not know where to go and whom to meet. While many are yet to receive all the stationery required to conduct the exercise, others are complaining of "inaccurate data" represented in maps and landmark identification sheets distributed by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

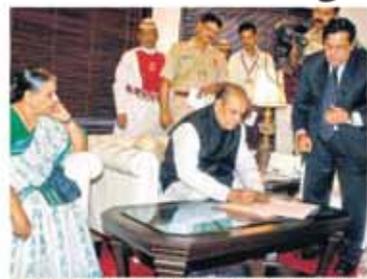
Seven enumerators, appointed to survey households at Juhu Gully in Andheri, have not been able to locate a single household so far. "We have been surveying the area for four days. We are yet to find a single name listed in the identification sheets," said one of the enumerators, who did not wish

to be named.

Another enumerator added that an empty eight-storey transit camp was shown as a building occupied by 194 people in the identification sheet provided by the civic body. "The names of the house owners/occupiers mentioned in the sheet are not familiar to the locals," the enumerator said.

Census takers from other parts of the city have also raised similar complaints. To complete the exercise in 45 days, the BMC has appointed 18,525 enumerators, who have been assigned 145-odd homes each.

The pre-census data was compiled in June last year and apart from staff from its health posts, the BMC had assigned the task to community health volunteers and college students. GT Ambe, executive health officer, BMC, who is a senior official coor-



Governor K Sankaranarayanan signs the enumeration card to launch the statewide census on May 1. —PI

minating the drive, admitted to having received complaints regarding "inaccurate data."

Ambe, however, said that this was only true in 10%

of the drive, admitted to having received complaints regarding "inaccurate data."

The discrepancies are mostly being reported in data collected by non-BMC staff," Ambe said. To overcome the hurdle, the BMC has now asked local health posts staff

## Importance of census

The national census is a decennial exercise that acquires and records information about the population. It is important to give correct information when the enumerators knock on your door as all future planning and budgetary allocations for the city will depend on the census data. Also, the unique identification number, which citizens are expected to get, will be on the basis of data collected during the census

to accompany enumerators, who face problems, in order to familiarise them with their assigned locality.

While Ambe said that "the maps and data are meant to

be used as a guide to facilitate the census exercise", social activist Haider Inaam feared that the "dubious" pre-census data could affect the efficacy of the census drive.

Another problem that has affected the census drive's pace is the logistics. Several enumerators complained that they have been assigned areas far-away from their area of residence or work. For instance, enumerators, who have been assigned Juhu Gully, hail from Karjat and Kalyan. A former civic official, who was part of the 2001 census activity, said that enumerators were assigned areas without "application of mind".

Ambe, however, refutes the charge. "We have tried to accommodate as many enumerators as possible in areas nearer to their area of residence or work."

## GENDER INEQUALITY

Number of girls born for every 1,000 boys as registered by the BMC over the past five years. Since 2007, no ward has seen more girls born than boys.

| Wards  | 2005       | 2006       | 2007       | 2008       | 2009       |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>A</b> Colaba, Churchgate, Fort  | 1073       | 984        | 924        | 903        | 867        |
| <b>B</b> Masjid Bunder, JJ Hospital  | 861        | 1,003      | 946        | 964        | 986        |
| <b>C</b> Marine Lines, Mumbaidevi, Marine Drive  | 861        | 1,107      | 907        | 826        | 854        |
| <b>D</b> Malabar Hill, Grant Road, Chowpatty, Walkeshwar, Bhulabhai Desai Road             | 967        | 925        | 895        | 880        | 915        |
| <b>E</b> Byculla, Mumbai Central   | 890        | 901        | 948        | 944        | 940        |
| <b>F</b> South- Parel, Lalbaug, M G Marikar Road   | 1,275      | 921        | 885        | 888        | 907        |
| <b>F</b> North- Sion, Matunga, Sewri, Kalachowkie  | 919        | 935        | 904        | 938        | 940        |
| <b>G</b> North- Shivaji Park, Dharavi, Mahim Causeway                                      | 878        | 926        | 964        | 890        | 938        |
| <b>G</b> South- Worli, Dadar   | 1,008      | 877        | 943        | 910        | 871        |
| <b>H</b> East- Bandra, Khar, Santa Cruz (E)  | 931        | 910        | 932        | 913        | 924        |
| <b>H</b> West- Bandra, Khar, Santa Cruz (W)  | 1,227      | 952        | 975        | 930        | 943        |
| <b>K</b> East- Andheri, Jogeshwari (E), Sahar  | 1,013      | 929        | 931        | 935        | 911        |
| <b>K</b> West- Andheri, Jogeshwari (W), Oshiwara, Lokhandwala                              | 886        | 939        | 906        | 931        | 925        |
| <b>P</b> North- Malad, Dindoshi, Kurad Village, Manori, Madh Island, Chincholi Bunder Road | 911        | 917        | 930        | 909        | 920        |
| <b>P</b> South- Goregaon, Aarey Village  | 903        | 912        | 965        | 976        | 902        |
| <b>R</b> North- Dahisar, Devidas Lane, Nancy Colony  | 825        | 914        | 884        | 862        | 917        |
| <b>R</b> South- Kandivli, Poisar, Charkop  | 833        | 894        | 922        | 899        | 935        |
| <b>R</b> Central- Borivli, Gorai and Kurlim Villages                                       | 979        | 900        | 896        | 934        | 917        |
| <b>L</b> Kurla, Kallina, Vikhroli, Ghatkopar Hills   | 887        | 916        | 901        | 907        | 934        |
| <b>M</b> East- Deonar, Marikhurd, Chembur, Trombay   | 901        | 942        | 921        | 917        | 902        |
| <b>M</b> West- Chembur (W)   | 900        | 925        | 932        | 901        | 904        |
| <b>N</b> - Ghatkopar, Vikhroli, Parkside Colony along LBS Marg                             | 945        | 900        | 909        | 911        | 927        |
| <b>S</b> - Powai, Kanjurmarg, Bhandup, Kanamwar Nagar                                      | 913        | 893        | 912        | 929        | 920        |
| <b>T</b> Mulund  | 868        | 881        | 905        | 883        | 911        |
| <b>MUMBAI</b>  | <b>917</b> | <b>920</b> | <b>921</b> | <b>918</b> | <b>919</b> |

cleaning underground sewers routinely suffocate to death because of lack of municipal care, facilities and equipment.

What can one say of an aerial survey of nullahs, open air drains, conducted by Udhav Thackeray, executive president of the Shiv Sena, the ruling party in the Mumbai municipal corporation in May this year? He was accompanied by Mayor Shradha Jadhav and municipal commissioner S.S. Kshatriya.

Despite the rapid economic growth, ordinary people continue to be treated with contempt and hostility. For seven million railway commuters in Mumbai there are woefully inadequate toilet facilities, a study by the Observer Research Foundation showed in 2010. There should be 12600 toilet seats for this population according to international standards. But there are only 600. Further humiliation awaits the commuters.

Those standing at the doors of crowded Harbour branch trains at the prime CST station are showered with water dripping from the toilet of one of the buildings of the railways. Some stations do not have a single toilet for women. These include some very busy and major ones like Andheri. Inexcusable, by any standards, especially considering that the officialdom enjoys huge perks like sprawling houses and the top ones have special luxurious salons in trains.

Life for the urban poor becomes more insecure and some of those displaced by urban renewal projects are

relocated in such isolated spots that it takes them one hour just to reach the suburban railway station. The whole system discriminates against the poor. A police officer told me that if a poor man complains about the abduction of his child and a rich man complains about theft of a music system from his car, the police will rather attend to the rich man. Many crimes committed against the poor go unrecorded. So it must be a really bad situation considering that three children in one single suburb of Kurla were found raped and murdered in the space of a couple of months earlier this year. Such is the alienation between the rulers and the common people that home minister R.R. Patil chose not to visit the families of the murdered children. He probably thought it would not be safe considering people's anger. He chose to call the families of the children to meet him at the police station at 11 in the night.

Two recent developments in the U.S. have lessons for Mumbai. Street vendors alerted the police about the Times Square bomb plot. The second incident is the massive oil spill causing enormous environmental damage. Street vendors and pedestrians are most essential to the life of a city as they function as the eyes and ears of the system and can prevent many untoward incidents. The oil spill shows the importance of saving our mangroves which are crucial to checking pollution. It is time at least this will convince our politicians, bureaucrats and builders about the need to save and promote mangroves.