



An Empirical Inquiry into the Nature of Systematic Discrimination and Trajectory of Increasing Communal Segregation in India

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the ongoing communal discrimination of Muslims and forced segregation. This large-scale discrimination of Muslims at every level is a recent phenomenon, primarily attributed to regular religious riots and state neglect to the issue. The study relies on field evidence and extensive literature review to understand the nature of the ghettoization process. In recent decades, Gujarat has become a focal point of communal tension, forces Muslim population to relocate to several within the state and sometime other parts of the country in search of safety from their original locations. It uses Juhapura area as a case to illustrate the discriminatory processes. These ghettos are underdeveloped and lack the physical and socioeconomic infrastructure necessary for a basic standard of living.

Keywords: Communal, Discrimination, Ghettoisation; Juhapura Muslim, Segregation

INTRODUCTION

The term 'ghetto' primarily emerged in connection with the isolation of the Jewish community before and during the World Wars along with well documented systemic relegation of the Black community throughout the history. Several ghettos had been identified historically before the 20th century, their recognition as segregated communities did not receive global level (Peach, 2005; Schwartz, 2019; Cheyette, 2020). The phenomenon of forced segregations has been documented for thousands of years. Examples from various parts of the world include the Judengasse ghetto in Frankfurt, the Venice ghetto in Italy, and the 16th century's Rome ghettos. In recent times Chicago's ghetto, and the Harlem ghettos are most prominent (Peach, 2005; Basant & Shariff, 2010).

The nomenclature 'ghetto' is largely applied to describe geographically concentrated and segregated social groups. This compression, segregation, and compartmentalization result from discrimination based on race, caste, class, religion, culture, and ideology (Marcuse, 1997). Such discrimination forces people to reside in small, homogeneous areas defined by uniformity, preceding to development of ghettos (Cheyette, 2020; Marcuse, 1997). Due to this discrimination, life in ghettos is often marked by weak economic circumstances, dilapidated buildings, inadequate health and sanitation services, and substandard shelter. Furthermore, the lack of formal education and health facilities, limited job opportunities, together with the nonexistence of essential amenities are chronic problems that echo with many of Muslim ghettos in India (Jaffrelet & Thomas, 2012; Thorat, 2015; Azam, 2023).

According to Lens (2017), although there were enclaves of Muslim communities where Muslims chose to live by choice, however, their forced marginalization into ghettos in India is a recent phenomenon. Similarly, other enclaves or communities also exist based on the factors including occupation and endogeneity (Galonnier, 2014; Thorat, 2015). Apart from Muslim community, Christians are also somewhat segregated, but less so than Muslims due to low population. Similarly, caste-based segregation (lower caste groups, such as the Dalits) is commonly observed in India (Ballhatchet & Harrison, 1980; Deshpande & Bapna, 2010; Dhattiwala, 2016).

Some scholars contend that the contemporary Hindu-Muslim divide is rooted in the British colonial strategy of 'divide and rule,' which stoked religious tensions to maintain imperial control (Sandhu, 2009; Rahman, 2015; Ahmed, 2021). This strategy fostered distinct religious identities, with the resultant conflict between Hindus and Muslims being a deliberate outcome (Belmekki, 2007; Sandhu, 2009; Ahmed, 2021). One consequence was the

rise of Hindutva activism led to religious movements based on claim that the deterioration of Hinduism is due to the perceived 'alien race' of Muslim invaders (Khan, et al, 2017; Sammyh, 2017; Ahmed, 2021).

However, academia also refers to the division between Hindus and Muslims as a natural outcome of the emergence of identity based political culture. This is reasoned with the diverse ideas of references drawn by both Hindus and Muslims from history to emphasis their socio-political objectives while building modern identities (Roy, 2013; Rahman, 2015).

The communal and political divide culminated in the partition of India in 1947, resulting in the creation of two nations: India and Pakistan. Partition caused widespread communal riots which caused deaths of massive amount of people and triggered large-scale migrations between the two newly formed countries. Survivors primarily sought safety within their own communities (Dyson, 2018). These mass migrations occurred rapidly within a short period, with estimates indicate that between 14 million and 18 million people were displaced. Over a million individuals are said to have perished as a result of intercommunal riots during the partition. Thanks to the atrocities of intergroup violence, this incident fueled and strengthened religious enmity. The violent division process bred mistrust and antagonism among the populations (Roy, 2013; Parwez, 2017; Dyson, 2018).

After independence, Indian democracy continues to be a delicate balance act in which self-declared secular and Hindu nationalist organizations often pass off deliberate assaults on minority groups (Christians, Muslims, and Sikhs) as spontaneous "riots," to support among majority Hindu electorate while maintaining the appearance of a functioning democracy (Jalal, 1998; Breman, 1999; Deshpande & Bapna, 2010).

Decades later, the persistent anti-Muslim mobilization in India continues to reinforce national identity by characterizing Muslims as alien adversaries. Similarly, Christians are depicted as an alien race in Hindutva narratives; however, due to their smaller population, the Hindu-Christian conflict remains less significant, widespread and not reported by mainstream media (Sandhu, 2009; Deshpande & Bapna, 2010; Khan, et al, 2017; Ahmed, 2021). Therefore, Christian ghetto in India is non to be found. Historically and the current political gains that have led to extreme Islamophobia leading to intense ghettoization of Muslims in compared to Christians (Basant & Shariff, 2010; Parwez, 2017).

However, Muslims in India have been driven to seek protection in different places due to anti-Muslim riots that occur on a regular basis, which is a worrisome issue in metropolitan regions. The riots in Gujarat state in 2002 provided the grimmest illustration of this phenomena, forcing Muslims to

abandon their ancestral homes in search of safety elsewhere (Gayer & Jaffrelot, 2012; Dhattiwala, 2016). Under such circumstances, the only option left is to migrate, opting for Muslims dominated areas out of fear of violence. They feel more secure living in religiously homogenous neighborhoods and communities (Jasani, 2008). Despite their lack of physical and socioeconomic infrastructure, even wealthy Muslims favor these neighborhoods over non-Muslim regions that provide comparatively greater facilities. The foundation for the ghettoization of Muslims is laid by this circumstance. Furthermore, the inability of builders or homeowners to rent to Muslims exacerbates the ghettoization process (Galonnier, 2014; Thorat, 2015). This has detrimental impact on socioeconomic circumstances of Muslims and their interactions with other communities but also on the Indian society (Jasani, 2008; Jaffrelot & Thomas, 2012).

In India, segregated housing neighborhoods are not a recent development; they have been around for generations, frequently because of cultural differences. Ghettos were mostly created in India because of the Caste system (Herscher, 2019). It is believed to be the oldest social hierarchical structure still in existence. In contemporary India, different regions are classified according to caste, cultural distinctions, migration and displacement, and communities residing in densely populated areas. In Indian society today, religious discrimination is the most common kind of segregation, has ensued in the socioeconomic exclusion of their residents.

The severe socio-economic backwardness of the Muslim community has been highlighted by the 'Sachar Committee Report (2006),' which delves into the poverty and marginalization faced by Muslims across India. The report raises concerns about the security and broader welfare of Muslims, which has contributed to their ghettoization across the urban center in the country (Sachar et al., 2006; Galonnier, 2014; Azam, 2023).

Additionally, the persistent anti-Muslim narrative is further fueled by films produced by the movie industry in various regions of India, particularly Bollywood in Mumbai. There is burgeoning production of anti-Muslim movies and the stereotypical representation of Muslim. This has contributed to the spread of hatred against Muslim among the general population. These films are heavily imbued with propaganda designed to support the agenda of the ruling regime, effectively indoctrinating a substantial portion of the public which is evident with their commercial success.

Communal segregation in these regions often results in significant socio-economic repercussions, undermining social cohesion and perpetuating cycles of communal violence. Limited access to education and employment intensifies criminal activity, as the youth in these ghettos become particularly

vulnerable to the influence of illicit elements. In such bleak conditions, crime and exploitation thrive, further destabilizing the social structure. Case analysis of Juhapura, this 'Muslim ghetto' exemplifies a marginalized community marked by systemic deprivation and neglect of its inhabitants. In the coming sections paper will discuss the methodology, literature review, field observations of Juhapura and conclusive remarks regarding the discrimination and forced ghettoization of Muslims in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW: GHETTOIZATION AND INCREASING ANTI-MUSLIMS DISCOURSE IN INDIA

Angelou (1981) portrays ghetto in Stamps (Arkansas), as a densely packed and segregated area with inadequate economic, material, and learning resources, where most members of the Black community fought for necessities like food and shelter. Similarly, Ellison (1964) describes the Harlem ghetto, became symbol of ethnic bias. It was a deprived and abandoned residential area, often plagued by a high incidence of what is termed anti-social activity. Such areas within a city are typically inhabited by ethnic or economically marginalized groups facing socio-economic and political pressures. A ghetto can be understood through three dimensions: Social (isolation), Economic (industrial decline), and Political-Legal (struggles with authorities to survive) (Herscher, 2019; Jasani, 2008; Sachar, 2006). Communal segregation in such regions often leads to profound socio-economic consequences, fostering a lack of social cohesion and contributing to recurrent communal violence. The absence of educational and employment opportunities exacerbates crime rates, as youth in these ghettos become increasingly susceptible to anti-social influences. In such dire circumstances, various forms of crime and exploitation proliferate, further weakening the societal fabric. When applied to the context of Juhapura, the 'Muslim ghetto' reflects a marginalized settlement characterized by systematic deprivation and neglect of its residents.

For years, communal riots have been driven by rage, hatred, and persistent fear, further exacerbated by politically prompted programs. This has deepened the division between social groups (Bremner, 1999; Berenschot, 2011; Susewind & Dhattiwala, 2014). Understanding the concept of a 'ghetto' becomes crucial in identifying its nature. Key questions about a ghetto's identity include its origins and purpose.

The label 'Muslim ghettos' has gradually been used to refer to Muslim localities that have developed or expanded in recent decades (Galonnier, 2014). The ghettoization observed in urban areas happens to be both informal and systemic, every so often facilitated by state authorities. There is a

narrative suggesting that Muslims opt to reside in these ghettos voluntarily, which implies self-segregation and mirrors conservative behaviors within the Muslim population (Varady, 2005; Jamil, 2014).

Historically, it has been practiced by various social groups to live in isolated communities. However, in recent years, the Muslim community has been particularly targeted for communal living, often carrying negative implications (Ray & Debraj, 2014). The phenomenon of self-segregation among Indian Muslims is multifaceted and cannot be attributed merely to religious differences. A significant factor is the historical memory of communal violence, is dominant factor influencing the residential patterns of successive generations of Muslims (Galonnier, 2014; Parwez, 2018).

Supporters of Hindutva uses the persistent discrimination to undermine the political and moral legitimacy of Muslims. Without political legitimacy, one cannot be recognized as a legitimate citizen, and without moral legitimacy, one cannot be considered fully human (Berenschot, 2011; Ray & Debraj, 2014; Khan, et al, 2017). Historically, dehumanization has often headed wars and genocides deemed morally justified. Examples comprise the Nazis' dehumanization of Jews with labels such as "vermin," the Rwandan authorities calling Tutsis as "cockroaches," recent Israeli references to Palestinians in Gaza as 'human animals,' and Indian politicians describing Bangladesh's Muslims seeking refuge in India as 'termites' in political gatherings, suggesting they should be barred or even eliminated.

In contemporary political discourse, violence against Muslims is increasingly portrayed as morally justified and a form of retribution, as it is seen as being directed at perceived foreign invaders (Dhattiwala, 2016; Susewind, 2017). These intermittent anti-Muslim riots, fueled by the hate and political agendas of right-wing groups, have forced Muslims into segregated spaces for their safety, leading to their ghettoization. The most striking example of this occurred in Gujarat, where the 2002 riots caused a large-scale exodus of Muslims seeking refuge in Muslim-majority areas to avoid future violence.

The phenomenon of ghettoization is predominantly seen in urban areas. Even middle-class Muslims have moved to these ghettos from socio-economically better-off areas out of fear (Contractor, 2012; Schutte, 2019). Years later, this ongoing ghettoization of Muslims also got further established with enactment of new provisions and implementation of 'Disturbed Areas Act' in Gujarat (Tejani, 2023). Anti-Muslim hatred or bias also witnessed systematically landlords/brokers refusing to rent or sell out homes or commercial premises to Muslims (Tejani, 2023; Thorat, 2015).

The Sachar Committee Report (2006) highlighted that the Muslims often faces social barriers to be able to access essential societal and economic resources, including formal education, local infrastructure, financial support business, and employment opportunities. Numerous studies on labor market suggests presence of biases against Muslims (Basant and Shariff, 2010; Gayer & Jaffrelot, 2012). It is largely because Muslim youth possess little bargaining power in labor market, this makes just remunerations elusive and susceptible to exploitation (Mhaskar, 2013; Ray & Debraj, 2014). This kind of prejudices forces many young Muslims into low-status jobs within ghettoized economic environments, where they earn minimal incomes. This also creates fertile ground for exploitation of youth. Young in the area become susceptible to criminal activities of various forms and young women could be subject to trafficking in poverty.

The increasing ghettoization adversely affects the socio-economic circumstances of Muslim community and their relationships with other social groups. These Muslim ghettos often lack basic facilities such as schools, hospitals, paved roads, clean drinking water, and sanitation. Additionally, ghettoization limits social interaction between different communities, fostering insularity and hindering public expression of thoughts and concerns (Basant & Shariff, 2010; Dhattiwala, 2016; Susewind, 2017). It also strengthens conservative religious groups and enables them to operate with greater impunity.

In last few decades, India has witnessed significant surge in identity politics, which has contributed to increased stigmatization of Muslims, Islamophobic behavior, communal violence, media led communal commentary, and political violence against Muslims aided by the state (Berenschot, 2011; Bhatnagar et al., 2020). This hateful propaganda has led to programs targeting the Muslim community resulted in notably communal violence such as Mumbai riots (1992-93), the Gujarat riots (2002) and in last decade, Muzaffarnagar riots (2013) and Northeast Delhi pogrom (2020). These riots unleashed immense violence against Muslims and intensified the spatial segregation of the Muslim community, pushing them into ghettos for safety and reorganizing urban spaces along communal lines, relegating Muslims to older and poorer city areas (Dhattiwala, 2016; Rahman, 2015; Susewind, 2017).

For instance, *Mumbra* located in outskirts of Mumbai, is comprised of 85 percent Muslim population. This area was largely the outcome of the violence and fear caused by anti-Muslim riots of 1992-93. Similarly, in cities like Ahmedabad, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Meerut, regular occurrence of the riots has compelled Muslims to abandon their homes, properties, and

businesses and move to Muslim-majority ghettos for shelter (Parwez, 2018; Rahman, 2015).

One more prominent example is in form of *Seelampur* in Delhi, which became Muslim majority neighborhood after massive number of people moved from *Shahjahanabad* during the 1980s. Juhapura in outskirts of Ahmedabad is another well-documented area where Muslim families moved after regular riots since 1985 but majority of them moved after communal riots of 2002. Anti-Muslim riots across the country often lead to mass migration and the formation of ghettos.

This trend is exacerbated by the current political climate, which has emboldened far-right groups to adopt extremist positions against Muslim community. These groups have launched propaganda tools and campaigns with catchphrases like "Land Jihad" and "Love Jihad" to malign, marginalize, alienate, and intimidate Muslims. In addition, there is call for economic boycott of Muslims and Muslim-owned businesses by right-wing politicians. Further, television news channels aided fuel to fire with continuous and everyday broadcast of anti-Muslim program, despite judiciary's strong condemnation. But media continues to aggressively promotes hate, inciting anti-Muslim sentiments creating a stereotypical image of Muslims. It has led to significant rise in hate crimes against Muslims across India.

The limited social interactions due to community ghettoization negatively impact communal relationship, deterring socio-economic opportunities for Muslims. This increasing discriminatory behaviors forces Muslim communities in urban India to live in segregated areas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is based on an extensive literature and field observations in Juhapura, one of India's largest Muslim-majority ghettos. The field observation was supplemented by extensive literature review. The literature study is broad and aims to analyze numerous facets of Muslim ghettoization, with a specific focus on India. We have tried to incorporate all relevant and recent publications. This methodology enabled us to identify the processes, causes, and consequences of ghettoization on Muslims, as well as its societal implications.

The analysis of literature review in this study on the ghettoization of Muslims in India relies on the collection and analysis of narratives through narrative inquiry methods (Connelly & Clandinin, 2005). In our research design, we use the term "narrative" to describe both the process and the outcome (Richmond, 2002). This involves treating literature as both a tool for critical reflection and as the product of such reflection, which helps in

understanding the conditions that lead to the creation of ghettos and the nature of the ghettos themselves.

Given the political nature of the subject, field contacts with respondents (Muslims) from Juhapura were qualitative and informal, since many were unwilling to be recognized. These brief exchanges and observations were not conducted through structured interviews. Fieldwork was carried out from February to March 2023, with face-to-face interactions conducted in Hindi to facilitate understanding. Exchanges were made through informal street interceptions with participants from varied socioeconomic groups. This method enabled thematic analysis to find patterns and themes in the replies and observations, so recording numerous elements of the difficult living circumstances of Juhapura ghetto and their implications.

We used the framework of action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2007), enabling respondents to tell their own experiences of life in a sequence of critical "prompting" inquiries focused to elicit detailed narratives. Each response was recorded, edited, transcribed, and analyzed through synchronous reading. The field evidence was further enriched by a comprehensive analysis of literature on the subject.

The study is constrained by the lack of structured survey and statistical tools to document respondent's narrative on the topic. The absence of detailed socio-economic data about the inhabitants of the Juhapura area in the public domain is another constraint. The absence of these limitations could have provided deeper insights into the formation of a ghetto and the lives of its residents.

JUHAPURA: A CASE OF GHETTOIZATION

Communal segregation based on ethnicity and religious identification is a relatively new phenomena in India, in compared to ancient caste-based segregation, which has long existed. In last few decades Gujarat has emerged as one most religiously sensitive state in India, with rich history of communal riots and segregation (Gayer & Jaffrelot, 2012; Dhattiwala, 2016). Frequent communal riots have prompted the Muslim population to relocate to safer places, resulting in the formation of various Muslim ghettos around the state. Juhapura, in Ahmedabad, has grown into the most recognized Muslim slum. Juhapura, a tiny outskirt area with a few thousand inhabitants in the mid-1980s on the banks of the Sabarmati were moved due to a significant flood (David, 2002). Today, the population of Juhapura is estimated to be about 500,000 and the area falls under the *Vejalpur* constituency. The size of the area is about 7.61 square kilometers.

Juhapura has worse socioeconomic indices than other regions of the city, like a slum that housed both Hindus and Muslims but communal violence of 1985 and 2002 compelled Muslims to relocate to Juhapura. By 1992, most Hindus had fled the region due to communal riots (Berenschot, 2011; David, 2002; Dhattiwala, 2016). For example, in the aftermath of 2002 riots, residents of *Naroda Patiya*, *Asarwa*, and many others were forced to relocate to Juhapura. Most Muslims from these areas fled out of fear of life (Bhatnagar et al., 2020). Periodic riots in Gujarat had laid the groundwork for Muslim ghettoization.

The following sub-sections explore the developmental trajectory of a Muslim ghetto in form of Juhapura. This exploration focuses on the spatial dynamics of Juhapura, the socio-economic hardships faced by its people, and the systematic communal segregation that has led to the creation of ghettos.

Map 1

Juhapura in Ahmedabad (marked by bold line)



Spatial perspectives from Juhapura

Juhapura located in outskirts of Ahmedabad is India's second-largest Muslim ghetto after old Hyderabad. Juhapura was established in 1973 to resettle families affected by floods but got transformed into a Muslim ghetto due to the communal riots in 1985 and 2002. Today, it is still one of Ahmedabad's most impoverished areas, a city inside a city that lacks basic public services and exemplifies ghetto-like spatial dynamics. Some portions

of Juhapura have 12-foot-high barriers that serve as informal community boundaries, prohibiting communication among communities. Locals are forced to commute seven or eight kilometers to reach older section of Ahmedabad, which still has a significant Muslim community. The busy market in Juhapura, with its little carts selling vegetables, fruits, garments, and cooking items, acts as a focal point for debates.

The absence of fundamental and social infrastructure in Juhapura is compounded by the heaps of garbage that are commonly seen throughout the area. Systematic neglect is apparent in this neighborhood, which, despite being only 7 km from Ahmedabad's city center, has developed into a ghetto with typical issues such as slender streets, overcrowded and deteriorating buildings, exposed wires, drinking water shortages, power cuts, non-existence of schools, pervasive dirt, insufficient parking, and a high crime rate.

Image 1

Overflowing open sewage in the Juhapura area of Ahmedabad



Residents are frustrated by the indifference attitude shown by the state authorities towards the needs of the Muslim community. The area is separated from Ahmedabad by a national highway and is somewhat isolated. In recent times during the visit of China's premier and USA president, Juhapura area got walled off to hid poverty. Although there have been some development efforts, these have been limited to the areas adjacent to the highway. Notable developments include small businesses, housing colonies

like Zainab Park, and ongoing real estate projects. Commercial establishments such as Danny's Coffee Bar, Hearty Mart, Ibrahim Plaza and Alibaba Multicuisine Restaurant are among the better commercial units in Juhapura. The neighborhood is also home to many Muslims with strong socio-economic backgrounds, who reside there not out of preference but because it offers relative safety from regular occurrence communal riots. Not only poor people but this area is also populated by the government employees, business owners, and Muslim politicians.

"In the past, both communities lived in segregated areas due to cultural differences but today it is largely due to fear." stated by a local builder.

The roadway that separates Juhapura is flanked with new, luxurious high-rise structures and fenced colonies. This form of exclusion appeared to be motivated by business motives, as mixed neighborhoods are in decline, and even wealthy Muslims have difficulty trying to acquire land. The strong demand for homes in Juhapura is due to the high income of certain people and a lack of available space. The Disturbed Areas Act (1991) bans property transactions between Hindus and Muslims in Gujarat, restricting the growth of mixed communities. This also creates artificial barriers that contribute to high demand and elevate real estate prices.

Amidst this turmoil, Muskan Park, established in 2003 by a non-governmental organization, stands as a free educational resource aimed at fostering knowledge and awareness among local children. The park has a variety of equipment, and gadgets provided by public sector businesses such as BSNL and ONGC for societal welfare. Muskan Park has evolved into an example of interfaith unity and a learning center, bringing together youngsters representing the Muslim and Hindu populations to play and socialize.

Since the 2002 riots, Juhapura's population has more than doubled, yet the area is not piped by water and gas connection, and public transportation is not accessible to local inhabitants. The neighborhood is characterized by narrow streets, deteriorating buildings, flooded drains, and piles of garbage. Residents express a desire for public spaces like parks or community halls where they could gather and communicate freely, but such amenities are considered a luxury given the area's basic deficiencies in services like water and electricity. Although Juhapura falls under the jurisdiction of the municipal corporations, critical public infrastructure and services are not to be seen. Healthcare facilities, which are critical for the welfare of any society, are not to mention. There are no government hospitals

to provide services to the poor and needy. Even though in recent times few private health facilities have come up in the area but that come with unaffordable prices. This has created dire situation especially for women and children from the poor economic background. Even though civil activists have taken legal courses to compel authorities to provide basic infrastructure in the area but change in the authorities' attitude towards Juhapura and its residents remain elusive.

Socio-Economic-Political apathy

Ghettoization significantly harms the socio-economic circumstances of inhabitants, leading to a marked decline in their economic status following forced migration and worsening relations between Hindus and Muslims. Juhapura is a prime example of marginalization of Muslim community and the government's apathy to their situation. Despite many years, even basic amenities are absent, demonstrating systematic anti-Muslim prejudice.

Image 2

Urban dwelling in Juhapura, Ahmedabad



Educational and job opportunities are notably scarce in Juhapura, which lacks decent schools and healthcare facilities. As a result, more than 700,000 residents who have lived there for over a decade view the area not as their home but as akin to a refugee camp. They feel displaced, as their roots are in other places, and their current life starkly contrasts with their past

experiences. This situation is a far cry from their previous lives, which followed a more favorable and self-determined path to be taken.

The government's promise of 'development for all' seems to fall short once you reach Juhapura. In Ahmedabad development works are unevenly distributed, with Juhapura being a prime example of this disparity. The nearest station of the 'Bus Rapid Transit System' is a kilometer away and it takes a detour before Juhapura. Although Ahmedabad-Vadodara expressway which crosses through Juhapura is well-maintained but inner streets of the area are severely neglected. Despite being included under the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation's jurisdiction in 2007, there has been no tangible improvement in Juhapura. The poor conditions in the area are largely attributed to the state's indifference and intentional abandonment of the Muslim community.

"Nobody wishes to listen to us." stated by a local resident.

In terms of economic activity, most residents of Juhapura are engaged in low-wage jobs and small businesses. They typically operate low-cost enterprises such as auto rickshaws, small shops, carpentry, or work in nearby small factories. Most women in Juhapura tend to remain confined within the ghetto's boundaries.

Additionally, a significant number of kids are not going to school. Additionally, most families can only afford under-resourced government schools rather than well-established private schools. Economically Juhapura is highly undeveloped in compared to the rest of Ahmedabad, is visible with increasing poverty among Muslim community (Ray & Debraj, 2014; Bhatnagar et al., 2020). The economic backwardness and poverty in the area highlight the neglect of this Muslim ghetto, which remains isolated despite the absence of physical barriers like walls or fences.

"Schooling for kids is a major priority in Juhapura." response of a local resident.

Currently, Juhapura has four public schools, established decades ago. According to the principal of privately run Crescent School in the area, there is only 500 students' capacity in the school, but the demand has gone over 9,000 seats. Further, more than 70 per cent of households cannot afford the high costs of private schools. These conditions also negatively affect and highlight the consequences of ghettoization.

In Juhapura, there is almost negligible sign of public participation and open expression is a luxury and only confined within the walls of the area in the present political climate. Any form of discussion in public is confined to quiet conversations within this thickly populated neighborhood, leaving little room for open debate. Politicians largely overlook this area, with minimal

election campaigning occurring during assembly and municipal elections. As a result, many residents feel disheartened and express a lack of interest in voting.

The negative impacts of ghettoization are clearly reflected in the words of a local resident: *"I attribute my identity to having grown up in diverse neighborhoods. Unfortunately, my 12-year-old child is disadvantaged by being born in this ghetto. This situation represents a significant obstacle for us. We all are only moving backward."*

Image 3

Reflecting on basic facilities in Juhapura, Ahmedabad



The challenges confronted by Muslim community have been exacerbated by their lack of representation in political and public spaces, a problem that is increasingly prevalent nationwide. Despite this, substantial barriers remain in their inclusion in mainstream and political spheres. Only a few human rights advocates, lawyers, and Muslim political organizations actively confront these obstacles.

Communal Segregation

Segregated living has been a longstanding practice in India, deeply rooted in societal hierarchy. But over the last few decades forced creation of Muslim ghettos often reflect on being overcrowded, deteriorating, and largely neglected. Historically, Indian society has been divided along caste and

religious lines. While Muslim-majority areas used to coexist with Hindu-majority neighborhoods, these mixed communities have largely disappeared due to communal riots, which have coincided with growing socioeconomic marginalization. The situation in Juhapura mirrors this pattern, with divisions between communal areas becoming more pronounced over time.

“I relocated from Navrangpura to Juhapura to ensure my family's safety. When I was in Navrangpura a Hindu neighbor said that it was time for me to leave.” a statement by the local resident.

In the past, communal differences were primarily cultural, but today's distinctions are rooted in fear, distrust, and a sense of alienation. Although urbanization was expected to bridge the religious and social divides but on contrast it has increased significantly in urban India. Even though majority of Muslims live in urban areas, but poverty and discrimination continue to confine them to newly created dwellings.

The state has long experienced riots but most notably riots of 1985 and 2002, which forced Muslims to move from Hindu-majority areas, marking the beginning of large-scale segregation. It has led to lack of trust, fear, and rising bigotry between communities and against Muslims. In response, the Gujarat government enacted the “Gujarat Prohibition of Transfer of Immovable Property and Provision for Protection of Tenants from Eviction from Premises in Disturbed Areas Act, 1991,” popularly identified as the "Disturbed Areas Act." This legislation aims to prevent individuals at risk of eviction due to communal violence from selling their properties in distress. Post 1985 communal riots, many Muslims began selling their homes to move to neighborhoods where they would be in the majority. While the law was intended to prevent segregation, it is now used by lawmakers to enforce it, creating a clear divide between Hindus and Muslims. This has significantly contributed to the formation of Muslim ghettos.

The ‘Disturbed Areas Act’ grants district collectors the authority to designate certain neighborhoods as "disturbed areas," typically where there has been a history of intercommunal violence. Once an area is classified as such, property transactions can only take place with authorization of the collector, and only to individuals outside the seller's religious community. Both the seller and buyer must apply, attesting that the sale was voluntary and at a fair price. However, this system places merchants and buyers from mixed religions at the discretion of government officials.

From 2013 to December 2019, the number of "disturbed areas" in Ahmedabad grew by 51 percent. There has been misuse of the law, in some cases entire villages and their surrounding areas are termed "disturbed," refer to heightened religious dissent, though officials tend to not provide logical

reasoning for these designations (Tejani, 2023). Although the law was intended to reduce segregation across Gujarat, in many cases, it has had the opposite effect.

The 2020 amendment to the "Disturbed Areas Act" allowed collectors to reject property sale applications if there was any potential for "polarization," "disturbance in demographic equilibrium," or "improper clustering" based on religious identities. This amendment has made the law more extreme, enabling the systematic targeting of Muslim community and their confinement to ghettos, thus preventing intercommunal interaction. As a result, neighborhoods like Juhapura are often derisively referred to as "mini-Pakistan" due to their large Muslim populations. Such terms are intended to foster communal hatred and perpetuate a narrative of division, reducing opportunities for interaction and reinforcing segregation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Societies prosper through their adaptability; otherwise, they fade over time. When social and cultural interactions are limited, the scope for change diminishes. There is a noticeable decline in sensitivity and cultural tolerance among diverse groups. The segregation of communities and spaces along religious lines undermines human capital and societal cohesion. Safety concerns often overshadow individual aspirations, and ghettoization restricts interactions between people of different faiths, which are crucial for developing human capital and exploring creative opportunities. The lack of diversity adversely affects socio-economic conditions and communal harmony.

Increasing segregation of Muslims in urban India is a concerning trend, evident in the emergence of numerous ghettos across the country in recent decades. The anti-Muslim riots of 2002, for instance, contributed to the creation of the Juhapura ghetto. Over the years, the Muslim minority continuously facing barriers in access to formal education, health facility, credit, and job opportunities. This is relatively due to the state's neglect and regular occurrence of communal riots that have perpetuated typecasts and security apprehensions. Such segregation influences policymaking, as policymakers consider the political implications of community and geographic distribution, often resulting in social schemes failing to reach these isolated ghettos.

Juhapura exemplifies the consequences of increasing ghettoization of Muslims, reflecting the socio-economic marginalization of generations. This marginalization is evident in the lack of state-provided socio-economic, cultural, and political services. Weak bargaining power limits opportunity to

good pay and working conditions, putting Muslims susceptible to exploitation. This continuous discrimination has forced Muslim youth to accept low paying jobs and poor working conditions.

Young people growing up in Juhapura face challenges in understanding their place within a biased system, leading to feelings of isolation, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation. Limited educational and labor market opportunities further diminish their status in society. The ongoing ghettoization reduces socio-economic prospects, exacerbated by governmental and private sector apathy toward the future of Muslims. While educated and wealthy individuals can often recover more quickly, discriminatory policies stifle Muslim youth growth and limit their employment options, keeping them in an informal workspace.

Juhapura exemplifies severe socio-economic and political neglect resulting from systematic segregation. For societal development inter-community connections and exchanges are essential, yet these connections are basically absent in divided society of urban India.

Communal violence in India has profound and far-reaching implications across various sectors of society. Primarily, it results in significant loss of life, property, and the displacement or forced migration of affected populations, leading to direct human suffering. Such violence erodes social cohesion and disrupts harmony, undermining trust between communities. Economically, communal violence destabilizes local economies, inhibiting business activity and deterring investment. The destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods has endured repercussions for the affected areas. Additionally, individuals and communities endure psychological trauma, fear, and long-lasting emotional distress. Disruptions to education and healthcare systems further exacerbate pre-existing disparities.

Socially, it has serious impact on Muslim community, as it marginalizes and alienated them to the limit. It may force youth to get associated with anti-coal elements adding further to disharmony and vilification of Muslims. This may also for educated and elite of Muslims to think seriously about their future in country which could lead to mass migration among creamy layer of the community.

From a political perspective, communal violence intensifies divisions and fuels polarization, thereby undermining democratic processes and weakening governance. On the international stage, such violence can tarnish India's reputation, adversely affecting foreign relations and deterring international investment. The aftermath often requires substantial resources for relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Consequently, the impact of

communal riots spans personal, social, economic, psychological, political, and international dimensions, highlighting the urgent need for preventive policies, conflict resolution, sustained efforts and affirmative actions to foster a peaceful and inclusive society.

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