

A tale of three cities

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THE results of the recently held assembly elections in Delhi should not be compared with other states where elections took place – not only because the electoral verdict in Delhi was different from other states, but because of Delhi's unique status. Even though classified as a state, Delhi still does not enjoy full statehood. It is also a city that attracts vast numbers of people from all over the country. There is large-scale migration from villages to urban centres in all parts of the country, but the migration into Delhi from other states is enormous.

The pace of migration has been extremely fast during the last decade, a period when large numbers, especially the poor, from Bihar and UP moved into Delhi in search of a livelihood. If the period between 1945-47, when large number of people from Pakistan migrated to this city, is seen as the first phase of migration, the decade of the 1990s should be considered as the second phase.

The net result is that this city has a truly cosmopolitan population – people from all parts of the country having settled down here. Also, people of all economic strata – from the very poor to the very affluent. This large-scale migration has changed the social character of the city. It is not the rich but the poor who form the numerical majority in Delhi.

The Jats, Punjabi Khatri and the Brahmins dominated politics in Delhi for many decades. At the time of elections, political parties only talked about the Jat and Punjabi

vote, not realising that large-scale migration has changed the social profile of this city. Though these two castes are numerically very large,¹ dalits too constitute a big section of Delhi's population – 19% according to the 1991 census. Though there are no official figures for people belonging to other castes, our survey estimates that there are also a large numbers of OBC voters in Delhi. The changing social profile has thus impacted on the changing pattern of politics. Our survey suggests that it is no longer caste, but economic status that plays an important role in the voting decision of the people. Though Delhi voters do have caste allegiance, it is class that dominates people's choice. The survey indicates that in the recently concluded elections, the poor Jat and the poor OBC in Delhi voted along similar lines as did the rich among these two communities.

Who constitute the poor in this city? With the help of the HT-CSDS survey, we made six categories of people in Delhi from very poor to the rich, primarily on the basis of assets owned. As per the classification, the very rich in Delhi constitute those who have two or more cars or two or more air-conditioners. The rich in Delhi are those with any two of the following – car, air-conditioner, computer and telephone. At the other extreme are the very poor, those with no material possession. Just above the very poor in the economic ladder are the poor who either live in *jhuggi-jhopri*, or a *kattcha-pucca* mix house, get drinking water from a MCD hand pump or community hand pump or from a MCD tanker and possess either a TV or a cycle or a radio. In between these classes are those classified as middle class – they either live in a HIG or MIG flat,

or have a car or scooter, a colour TV and a refrigerator and at least one telephone. The lower middle class in Delhi constitute those who live in either LIG or Janata flats or kattcha-pucca mix houses and have at least two among the following assets – scooter, refrigerator, telephone, colour or black and white TV, radio.

According to the survey, 6% of the people living in Delhi are very poor and another 28% poor. If clubbed together, 34% would be considered as poor. On the other hand, nearly 6% people in Delhi would be considered as very rich and another 12% as rich. As such, 18% people in Delhi are those who would be considered as belonging to the rich class. There is a big middle class, which constitutes 48% of the population. Among the middle class, 28% belong to the upper middle class, while 20% fall in the lower middle class.

There is a clear class difference between the native residents of Delhi and the migrants. Among the natives, a larger number are either rich or belong to the middle class. On the other hand, among the migrants from Bihar and Jharkhand, a large number are poor, and only 7% are rich. Similarly, most migrants from UP and Uttaranchal are also poor. But those who migrated to this city at the time of independence have become very rich – 87% among them have become rich or belong to the middle class.

There is equally a caste dimension to this economic categorisation. The upper castes are relatively rich compared to people of all other castes. The Punjabis in Delhi are the richest, as a high percentage among them are economically very well off and there are

only a few who are poor. The Jats and OBCs are not that rich, but many belong to the middle class. The dalits are the poorest in Delhi. While 52% are poor, only 4% dalits are rich. The Muslims in Delhi too are not economically well off with a majority falling among the poor. Of the Sikhs, nearly 30% are rich and only 17% poor.

Besides the differing social profile of the rich and the poor of this city, their thinking pattern is also different. Currently, there is a trend towards privatisation of various services in this city – from transport to education and health. The survey reveals that while there is some support for privatisation among the rich and the middle class, the poor in Delhi are opposed to it. Though not everyone in the city is hostile to privatisation, clearly opposition to it outstrips those in favour. One can clearly see differences of opinion among people of different economic classes – the rich in favour and the poor displaying greater resistance. The opinions of the middle class lie in between.

There is a vast gulf in the thinking of the people belonging to the two economically opposed social communities, the rich and the poor. The rich have a different mindset from that of an average Dilliwalla. While a majority of poor are in favour of caste-based reservation in government jobs, a majority of the rich are against such a policy. The rich in this city see beggars as a nuisance and would like the police to deal with them more strictly. The poor, however, have great sympathy for them. Little wonder that the wealthy want the jhuggis removed, but there are very few among the poor who would support such a move. Further, the rich

favour a ban on outsiders settling in Delhi. This feeling is shared by a large number of people, but much more among the rich. This urban rich mindset is such that large numbers among them believe the illiterates should not have the right to vote, but the poor clearly disagree.

Despite these differences of opinions there is unanimity about democracy being the best form of government. Both the rich and the poor have firm faith in democracy – 81% of the rich and 69% of the poor share this opinion. But, is there a difference in the voting pattern between the two? The findings of the HT-CSDS Delhi survey help us in providing a tentative answer to this question.

A quick look at the results of the recently held assembly elections in Delhi show that the Congress party won 47 assembly seats, polling 48% of the votes. On the other hand, the BJP won only 20 seats and polled 35% votes. Only two smaller political parties – the JD(S) and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) – won a seat each, with all other political parties shut out. An independent candidate won a single seat. Though the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) failed to open its account, it polled 5.8% votes. Compared to the 1998 assembly elections, there was little difference in the performance of the two major political parties. The votes polled by the Congress and BJP indicates that the support for the Congress was much higher compared to the BJP. But does this mean that a majority of the people from all social communities voted for the Congress while the BJP was deserted by all sections of society?

If we look at the voting pattern of people belonging to different economic classes, we notice that despite the defeat, large numbers of the rich and very rich voted for the BJP, but among the poor and the very poor voters a large number voted Congress. Among the very rich and rich voters, 44 and 41% voted BJP, while among the poor and the very poor only 24 and 18% voted for the party. Among the poor and very poor voters, 53 and 54% voted Congress, indicating a clear differentiation in the voting pattern of people belonging to different economic classes.

This does not mean that caste had no role to play in the politics of the city. Rather, when it comes to voting for a political party, it is class that cuts across caste.

The voting pattern of Brahmins shows that a majority supported the Congress as compared to the BJP. One notices a similar voting pattern of people belonging to other upper castes. Can we then conclude that the upper castes voted for the Congress in large numbers in the recent assembly elections in Delhi? This may be true, but if we examine the voting pattern of people belonging to a different economic class among the Brahmins, the poor among them voted Congress while the rich voted BJP. Even among the Punjabi Khatri, while the poor voted for the Congress the rich favoured the BJP. It is only among the Jains and the Banias that, irrespective of their economic class, all voted for the BJP in large numbers.

Though the Jats were divided in the recent assembly elections, there was a tilt in favour of the Congress. But this was not true of all Jats. While the rich Jats voted for the BJP in large numbers, the poor voted for the Congress. Among the rich Jats, 50% voted for the BJP, and only 32% for Congress. On the contrary, among the poor Jats, 47% voted for the Congress and only 28% for the BJP. A similar voting pattern is observed among the Sikhs, the rich voting for the BJP and the poor for the Congress.

It is only among the OBCs and dalits, irrespective of class, that large numbers voted Congress and only a few for the BJP. The Muslims too stood solidly behind the Congress.

It will be incorrect to make broad generalisations about Delhi and the people living in this city. It is, however, clear that Delhi is not one city, but basically represents three cities merged into one. Gone are the days when people used to think of two Delhi's – New Delhi and Old Delhi. Lately, this differentiation changed from New Delhi/Old Delhi to *Yamuna Paar* and the rest. It is time we see Delhi as three different cities – a city of the rich, the poor and of a large middle class – all merged into one. The three cities though not separated from one another by geographical boundaries, clearly display social and cultural boundaries. The question to ponder over is: with increasing migration and a growing population, will the three different identities of the city remain or are they likely to merge in the years to come?

TABLE 1			
<i>Place of origin</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Poor</i>

Delhi	20	53	27
Bihar and Jharkhand	7	31	61
UP and Uttaranchal	10	46	45
Pakistan	36	51	13
Other states	23	49	28

TABLE 2			
<i>Castes</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Poor</i>
Brahmin	20	55	25
Punjabi Khatri	44	46	10
Banias & Jains	32	51	17
Other upper castes	21	53	24
Jats	14	61	26
OBCs	8	43	52
Dalits	4	44	52
Muslims	5	43	52
Sikhs	30	53	17

TABLE 3				
Opinion on Privatisation of DTC				
	<i>All</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Poor</i>
DTC should be privatised	19	30	20	13
DTC should not be privatised	64	55	66	67

government undertaking				
<i>Note: no difference 5%; no opinion 12%.</i>				

TABLE 4				
Opinion on Privatisation of Electricity				
	<i>All</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Poor</i>
Privatisation of electricity has benefited people	31	45	31	22
Privatisation of electricity has increased problems for people	54	40	55	59
<i>Note: no difference 9%; no opinion 6%.</i>				

TABLE 5				
Opinion on Government Schools				
	<i>All</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Poor</i>
Teaching in government schools can improve by increasing fee	14	18	15	11
Teaching in government schools can improve without increasing fee	74	71	74	76
<i>Note: no difference 6%, no opinion 6%.</i>				

TABLE 6				
Opinion on Government Hospitals				
	<i>All</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Poor</i>
Public will pay more for	30	40	32	21

government hospitals				
Treatment should be free in government hospitals	61	51	60	69
<i>Note: no difference 4%; no opinion 5%.</i>				

TABLE 7				
The Middle Class Mindset of People Living in Delhi				
<i>Those who agree –</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Poor</i>
Illiterate should not have the right to vote	23	36	24	14
Caste based reservations in jobs should be stopped	55	74	59	41
Jhuggis should be completely eliminated from Delhi	57	73	63	39
Temple should be constructed at the disputed site at Ayodhya	59	58	62	54
Outsiders should be stopped from settling down in Delhi	59	64	63	51
No one should have the right to go on strike	42	51	52	35
Police should deal more strictly with beggars	67	76	70	57
Democracy is the best form of government	75	81	77	69

TABLE 8
The Rich and the Very Rich Voted for the BJP While the Poor Voted for the Congress

<i>Economic class</i>	<i>Congress</i>	<i>BJP</i>
Very rich	37	44
Rich	38	41
Middle class	45	36
Lower middle class	51	27
Poor	53	24
Very poor	54	18

TABLE 9

		<i>INC</i>	<i>BJP</i>
How Upper Castes Voted in the Delhi Assembly Elections			
Brahmins	Rich	34	49
	Middle	44	40
	Poor	45	37
Punjabi Khatri	Rich	34	45
	Middle	39	42
	Poor	41	40
Baniyas & Jains	Rich	32	49
	Middle	36	47
	Poor	32	44
Other upper castes	Rich	40	42
	Middle	41	37
	Poor	47	33
How Jats and OBCs Voted in the Delhi Assembly Elections 2003			

Jats	Rich	32	50
	Middle	41	43
	Poor	47	28
OBCs	Rich	39	34
	Middle	46	33
	Poor	51	25
Dalits, Muslims and Sikhs			
Dalits	Rich	62	16
	Middle	56	18
	Poor	56	14
Sikhs	Rich	33	43
	Middle	44	35
	Poor	51	21

Footnotes:

1. As per the HT-CSDS 2003 survey estimates, Brahmins are 12%, Punjabi Khatri 9% and Jats about 5% of Delhi's population. The HT-CSDS Delhi survey was conducted in all the 70 assembly constituencies of Delhi. In each assembly constituency, 20% polling booths were randomly selected using the probability proportionate to size (PPS) technique. The total number of sampled localities where the survey was conducted was 1700. In each selected polling booth, two per cent voters were randomly selected from the electoral roll. In total about 38,000 voters, randomly selected from the voters list, were approached for the interview in September-October, 2003. The total number of completed interviews is 14,460.

