



Secured residential enclaves in the Delhi region: Impact of indigenous and transnational models



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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the development of secured residential enclaves in India, especially in Delhi. It expounds the conditions of their emergence and success: although gated communities are a market driven development boosted by economic liberalisation reforms, they are also embedded in indigenous traditions of residential segregation and enclosure as well as colonial practices. The Non-Resident Indians (NRI) have further played a significant role in the production of these new residential spaces. Significant appeal factors are explored: desire for security, retreat from failing government and the polluted city, search for exclusivity, elitism and social homogeneity. Tapping into the Indian diaspora market and the middle-class' aspirations for social status, promoters have projected their residential enclaves as a way of "global living" in a healthy environment, reserved to a privileged cosmopolitan elite. Yet, gated communities in Delhi are not a mere exogenous Western production; rather, they are spaces in-between the global and the local. The findings are based on direct field observations in Delhi and a review of advertisements by real estate developers in various media. The analysis pursues an Indo-Chinese comparative perspective with reference to the research of Marie Sander (this issue) on gated communities in Shanghai.

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*Malibu Condominiums. American-Style Luxury Apartments.*¹

Malibu Towne: Planned and developed by ex-NRI Californian.

*American suburban ambience. Malibu Towne has been designed to include cul-de-sacs and extensively landscaped to create the ambience of a typical lush green American housing development.*²

Sagar Estate's Riverdale – America – East of Delhi: Citizenship opens today.

Today we are laying the foundation of a New America, east of Delhi.

The all-America condominium style of life now comes to India. [...]

Riverdale is planned and designed by the Canada-based architect, Ramesh Khosla. [...]

Citizenship is open today to all who like to live in America. [...] this condominium captures the spirit of liberty like no other.

*Luxury and comfort, till now only seen west of the Atlantic. Now, east of Delhi.*³

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¹ Italics for quotations indicate that those are drawn from publicity hypes by the promoters of residential estates.

² Advertisement by S. Sagar Suri Group, published in the Delhi edition of the *Times of India*, 14 January 1995. See Fig. 1.

³ Advertisement by Malibu Estates Private Limited, published in *The Pioneer*, Delhi, 24 December 1995.

These slogans, drawn from two advertisements published in 1995 in the Delhi edition of leading newspapers to sell luxury apartments in new condominiums on the outskirts of the Indian capital, could not have been found in Chinese media even today – especially the second one. Although the rise of secured residential enclaves inspired by the North American model of gated communities is a market-led development common to both countries and which was boosted by economic reforms, the production and promotion of such type of high-standing residential complexes in India bear some distinctive features. For instance, the overt uncritical reference to the American lifestyle and its "spirit of liberty" would be out of place in the Communist People's Republic of China. These advertisements also highlight a specific figure of the Indian



MALIBU CONDOMINIUMS

American-Style Luxury Apartments

Planned and developed by ex-NRI Californian

American Suburban Ambience Malibu Towne has been designed to include cul-de-sacs and extensively landscaped to create the ambience of a typical lush green American housing development. With openness and freshness one would love to breathe!

The condominium complex itself has water lagoons, fountains, downs and meadows, and is surrounded by jogging, walking and cycling trails amidst a forest environment.

The condominiums also have uniquely controlled and breathtakingly beautiful surroundings.

Maximum – security colony • Entire colony behind the gates and fully-fenced • Restricted entry into the colony • Condominium-complex doubly-secure with world-class security devices, electronic locks and CCTV!
• Mobile patrol cars equipped with the latest communications devices and linked with a central communication system.

Facilities • Preferential membership in Malibu Country Club across the road.
• American-style shopping complex also across the road. • Nursery, Primary and High Schools within the colony. • Playground for children within the complex itself. • Convenience store within the complex. • Pubs and restaurants.
• Theatre actively operational for cultural activities. • Meadows golf club just 2 kms. away. • Fireball disco within 5 minutes drive!

World-Class Design and Conveniences • Entrance lobby is embellished with granite flooring and spectacular atrium! • High-speed super-efficient elevators. • Garbage chutes on each floor. • Laundromat in the basement.
• Underground parking for each apartment. • Standby generator for all common services. • American-style bathtub and shower sliding glass panels. • Marble in foyer, drawing room, dining room, family room, kitchen and bathroom; granite counters in bathrooms and kitchen. • Built-in bedroom wardrobes and walk-in closets.

Convenient payment plans	
<p>Malibu Plan</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The Full Payment plan allows an attractive discount</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The 3-year payment plans is interest free.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CITIHOME</p> <p><i>Home loans from Citibank</i></p> <p>The 5 to 15 year Citihome Plan make your apartment/property purchase more convenient than ever before!</p>



MALIBU TOWNE

Govt. approved
freehold residential
township

Condominium
construction
started

Call Sales Office: 1001, Ambadeep, 14, Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi-110 001. Ph.: 3329414, 3721852

Corporate Office: MALIBU HOUSE, 38 DDA, Commercial Complex, Kailash Colony Extension, New Delhi-110 048. Ph.: 6431573, 6419969. Telex: 031-70105 UKPI IN. Fax: 91-11-6447864

Fig. 1. The model of Malibu Towne.

Source: Newspaper advertisement in the *Times of India*, Delhi, 14 January 1995.

urban scene, the 'NRI', or Non-Resident Indian. These are, legally speaking, Indian citizens living abroad (expatriate Indians) although in common usage this category often includes people of Indian origin who are citizens of other countries as well — NRIs thus becomes a synonym for the Indian diaspora, estimated to be over 25 million people.

In this paper, I shall examine from a comparative perspective the development of secured residential enclaves in India, more specifically in the Delhi region, focussing on some selected issues analysed by Marie Sander in this volume for gated communities in Shanghai. I will first expound the conditions of emergence and success of gated communities in India, with a discussion similar to the development of this housing model in China: to which extent is it a new imported Western concept, or the outcome of a historical evolution rooted in indigenous social and cultural tradition? I will then focus on the role of NRIs in the production of new residential forms — the NRI category is certainly more relevant in the Indian

context than that of expatriates, which are the focus of Sander's study, in this Special Issue. Lastly, I will engage with a discussion on the appeal of gated communities with a view to contribute to an Indo-Chinese comparative perspective. Thus, with reference to general debates in the context of North America, Europe as well as emerging countries (Atkinson & Blandy, 2006; Cséfalvay, 2011; Cséfalvay & Webster, 2012; Glasze, Webster, & Frantz, 2006), I will explore in the case of Delhi the relevance of some main factors identified or discussed by Sander (this volume) and other authors in the Chinese context (Wu, 2005, 2010). These factors include desire for security; retreat from failing government and from the polluted city; search for exclusivity, elitism and social homogeneity.

The analyses on Delhi presented here are based on a combination of several sources: direct field observations in the Delhi region spread over the years since 1993, including a systematic migration survey conducted in DLF City in 1995 that covered a representative sample of 164 households and was completed with in-depth

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