

**URBANISM IN PAKISTAN:
A GLIMPSE INTO ISSUES AND REMEDIES**

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ABSTRACT

A major side effect of the unprecedented speedup in world population growth today is the ever-increasing concentration of population in cities the world over. Given the current rate of population growth of Pakistan being higher than those of many developing countries, twelve cities with population of more than four hundred thousands have emerged, thus aggravating the infrastructure in those newly formed establishments. The pull factor of rural–urban flow, inter alia, is the concentration of modern activities in urban areas or alternatively the poor development of the rural areas. Rapid industrialization has further created opportunities as well as many problems for both rural and urban people. This paper attempts to explore various parameters of urbanism and consequent issues arising thereof with proposed solutions are being critically analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

Urban growth is a combination of two phenomena viz. (i) Urbanization – the state of population concentration, and (ii) Urbanism – the city dwellers’ ways of life (William, 1975:506). In contrast to Urbanization which refers to a change in population patterns, urbanism refers to changes in culture, social structure and life style (John, 1981:396). Urbanization produces urbanism – a way of life i.e. do as you like to do in a big city where you are not known and the public opinion has little power to control conduct. Urban ways of life inevitably encourage attitudes of selfishness, exploitation of one’s fellowmen and indifference to human suffering, which may lead to the decay of basic moral standards and ultimately to the decline of urban dominated civilization (Hassan, 1999:37). And the size, density and heterogeneity of population in cities affect the mode, intensity and frequency of contact which influence the approach of the process of socialization and human nature itself. Even the basic social institutions such as family and religion are subjected to forces

which modify their structure, their role and their hold on the behavior of the person.

Despite socio-economic and technological problems, the city and urbanism have paved the way for the great achievements of civilization. They have done more than in increasing the increased mastery of man over nature in general, and in advancing technology, increasing productivity and raising levels of living in particular.

LOCATING INDUSTRIES

Throughout the country, urban population represents about 32.5% of the total population of 132.35million (1998 census) as against 23% in 1961 and 25% in 1972 is evident from the table given below.

Table-1

YEAR	POPULATION (000)	URBAN %
1961	42880	22.52
1972	65309	25.41
1981	83782	28.28
1998	132352	32.5

Source: *Census Report of Pakistan, 1998.*

The current growth rate of 2.69% annually is high in comparison to other developing countries. In addition to this, 43.4% of the total population is under the age of 15 years. Thus there is a large potential for further population growth because greater number of families will enter reproductive age every year.

The growth trend of urban areas in Pakistan indicates the emergence of 12 cities with a population of more than four hundred thousand (1998 Census) when their number in 1951, 1961, 1972 and 1981 was 2, 3, 6 and 8 respectively. Therefore, cause of rural-urban flow is the concentration of modern activities in urban areas and the poor development of the rural areas. Thus pull factor of migration to one particular place or province like Sindh, weakens the economy and gives rise to many problems. With the technological development, the industries have expanded in scale. As a result, exploitation of resources creates problems of urbanization, town congestion and destruction of country-side with strands of moral and religious processes having their effects on the

family, the structure of social classes and the patterns of social values and behavior (Wright, 1970:145).

Rapid industrialization of sixties in Pakistan further created opportunities as well as many problems for both rural and urban people due to new technologies. The opportunities include higher education and training that equipped them with better occupational skills and a growing awareness and involvement of many urban people in political activities and the modernization process in general contained a long list of problems. This paper further explores some problems of urbanism.

HOUSING AND SLUMS

Next to the quest for food, the need of shelter has been paramount. Poor urban housing conditions above all are a social threat. While healthy living environment contributes to the improvement of family life, enhances productivity of labour, increasing population has brought with it the question of providing homes. The rural migrants face the problem of housing and settlement in cities. They find their place of living through different approaches such as:

- i) Simply building a hut as a squatter near river banks, near the centre of the city, in the city streets as well as on the outskirts;
- ii) Many people occupy the scattered vacant plots in the inner parts of the cities that are held vacant by urban investors. The occupants have to face eventual eviction; and
- iii) Migrants pay a small rent to the owner of the land.

A problem of housing is further aggravated by some opportunist city dwellers to encroach upon the land. In cities, land is often un-used because it is undesirable or unsuitable for permanent buildings. It may consist of swamp, low grounds subject to flooding refuse dumps or useless land for cultivation or land which is outside the scope of the city water system. So, some better organized groups of workers obtain recognition from the government of their right of occupancy. In this way, pressure on land within cities increases and also rent becomes exorbitant in relation to incomes, land prices shoot up and poor housing is mixed up with better residential buildings. Consequently, human welfare and productivity of the country is affected due to poor health conditions.

According to 1998 Housing Census Report, there are over 19.3 million housing units in the country, out of which 32.3 percent in urban areas (GoP, 1998). Extrapolating to the year 2012, it is likely that 40 percent of the population or about 58 million to 60 million persons will live in urban areas. Given the rate of population growth annual incremental demand is estimated at between 300,000 to 500,000 units (NBP, 2003:12). Many of those who have access to housing suffer from congestion and lack of basic facilities. Nearly 50 percent of the population is living in one-room tenements, within low rate average family of 6.6 persons per room (*Ibid*). This has not shown much improvement during the first decade of twenty-first century, reflecting the poor housing conditions prevalent and the general standard of living.

The provision of shelter, infrastructure and services has not kept pace with the rapid and unplanned urban population growth that Pakistan has experienced. This has resulted in the deterioration of environmental living condition, increased health hazards, traffic problems and rapid growth of slums and squatter settlements.

PROSTITUTION

In spite of existence of State statues and social norms, political instability and the absence of sound economic policy has created a grim situation in Pakistan in which social evils, among others prostitution, have become rampant and social offenders gone uncontrollable. The greedy and professional pimps living on the earning of the others exploit the girls/women mainly for their own benefits at the cost of social good (Saeed, 2003:17).

Prostitution is an old institution. Divorce, desertion, widowhood, economic stress, great expectations, advancement of education, late marriages, artificial living and mass media etc. are the important causes of prostitution today. Under these circumstances, in the changing Pakistani society, a professional prostitute has a house; often she possesses status but is devoid of chastity (*Ibid*). She is backed by big guns. Adolescent girls particularly become delinquents and suffer from sexual frustration due to lack of parental care and support on one hand, and their association with bad company on the other, become professional prostitutes. In big commercial and administrative cities, such as: Karachi a city of oblivion, girls and women have adopted

prostitution as a profession for livelihood and meeting their wants which according to economists are un-limited. This approach is very simple, safe and cheap.

This is unethical and immoral profession. The after effects of this profession are as under:

- i) It spreads viral diseases and goes untreated for a long time because of the shyness and unwillingness of the prostitutes to visit a doctor for medical checkup and treatment,
- ii) Frequent abortions occur which go un-registered and un-noticed,
- iii) It affects the health of young girls,
- iv) It creates ill-feelings, unrest and frustration among the neighbours and pollutes social environment,
- v) It promotes artificial living, and
- vi) Sometimes young girls die due to mishandling by the licentious persons.

VAGRANCY

According to James W. Rinhardt (except where defined by statute) vagrancy is, “the behavior of a person without permanent social attachments, aimless wandering of an individual without visible means of legitimate self support” (Fairchild, 1964:331).

The society is undergoing rapid change to new order. Economic principle, i.e. scarce means, competition and unlimited wants, comes true. Without wealth and power one cannot survive in cities. Majority of people do not make their both ends meet with what they earn. When their immediate wants are not satisfied, some people having lost shyness and feeling of self respect resort to begging and others turn into professional pimps and beggars.

There are four types of vagrants (Lashary, 1979:38):

- i) Beggar maids-cum-prostitutes,
- ii) Vagrant couples with or without children,
- iii) Part time beggars,
- iv) Sellers/hawkers-cum-beggars

As to the statistics of vagrants, no exact number can be given because no survey has been made at the country level. However, according to the report of Commission for Eradication of Social Evils, the Commission obtained data relating to beggars from 7 major cities of Pakistan. The total number of professional beggars in these cities was reported to be 65589 which came to 0.3% of the population of these cities i.e., there was about one beggar for every

333 persons living in urban areas of Pakistan. Excluding Karachi, the ratio of beggars in other 6 cities came to about one beggar for every 100 persons (GoP, 2005:31).

SOCIAL EFFECTS OF VAGRANCY

- a) It destroys sense of self respect and personal dignity,
- b) It encourages crimes, intoxication and prostitution,
- c) It causes social disorganization.
- d) It gives birth to illegitimate children,
- e) It gives very bad impression about our national character.

EDUCATION

Literacy enriches life and enhances the learning capability of workers. It may be pointed out that literacy ratio in rural areas is very thin which creates impediment to the road of economic and technological advancement.

Table-1
LITERACY RATIO OF POPULATION TEN YEARS
AND ABOVE IN URBAN/RURAL AREAS, 1998

Pakistan	Urban %	Rural %
Total 43.92	63.08	33.64
Male 54.81	70.00	46.38
Female 32.02	55.16	20.09

Source: Government of Pakistan, *1998 Census Report of Pakistan*, p.116

Table-1 indicates that literacy ratio in rural areas is 33.64% as compared to the urban areas i.e. 63.08% although the population of this sector is more than the urban areas. This inequality creates a large number of illiterate persons in the villages.

A number of developing nations around the world have recorded impressive declines in mortality and fertility only through the level of education. China, Korea, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia are the countries of example. A common factor in all these countries has been the increase in literacy and educational enrolment. The most important determinant of decline in mortality and fertility is the level of female literacy. In case of Pakistan overall literacy rate is miserably low which has affected socio-economic development.

UNEMPLOYMENT

The rapid growth of population is one of the most important factors of unemployment in rural areas. During 1951-1961, the population of urban areas increased by 4.8% annually, during 1961-72 by 5%, 1972-81 by 4.2% and during 1981-98 by 5.06%. Total growth rate during the same period throughout the country was about 3% and that in the rural areas only 2.4%. According to these figures the annual migration from rural to urban areas covers 3.3 million people on the average. The reasons for migration from rural areas to towns/cities are attributed to under-employment, seasonal un-employment and small earnings in the rural areas, hold of capitalist class and unequal distribution of economic and social opportunities for the broad masses living in the rural sectors.

Table-2

RATIO BETWEEN THE POPULATION AND CULTIVATED AREA

Year	Geographical Area	Cultivable (Million hectares)	Total	Cropped Areas
1971-72	79.61	19.09	16.00	20.125%
1980-81	79.61	20.25	19.22	20.216%
1997-98	79.61	20.26	19.30	20.625%

Source: Agricultural Statistics of Pakistan (1998), pp.109-112.

Table-2 shows that as a result of the rapid decrease in the rural population and the insufficient land under cultivation the extent of cultivated land per capita has decreased from 1.11 acres to 0.73 acre. The increase in the cultivated land from 19.09 million hectares in 1971-72 to 20.26 in 1997-98 was because of the use of modern agricultural machinery and irrigation facilities (GoP, 1998:109-112). In view of this, rural under-employment and unemployment is widening, and surplus people move to urban areas for employment besides other motives.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Small farmers be given incentives in the form of higher guaranteed prices for food crops, basic amenities of life and marketing facilities to prevent the flow to urban areas.
2. To increase investment in science and education which will bring changes in fertility behavior of the people, improve environmental protection and raise quality of people with the aim to create new higher productivity for continuous economic growth.

3. Urban expansion be diverted so as to avoid loss of agricultural lands needed to feed the city people.
4. The equitable distribution of drinking water in cities is a problem. Safe piped water and drainage system be provided to urban people including slums and *katchi abadi*. Rural sector remains neglected.
5. Poverty is increasing as a result of socio-economic and political factors which foster injustice, oppression and dependence. Arrangements be made to reduce the tempo of inequitable distribution of income and wealth.
6. Industrialization in big cities be de-centralized so as to reduce the pressure of migration to cities by raising the standard of living of farmers and providing them with new employment opportunities and basic services.
7. Prevailing conditions of our cities be improved into efficient, clean, beautiful modern cities with advanced industry, science, culture and foreign trade.

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