

SOCIAL EFFECTS OF URBANIZATION IN PAKISTAN

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Urbanization is a name given to a multitude of changes in the pattern of organization of a society. Urbanization is not only a movement of people from rural to urban areas, it is simultaneously a movement in the case of under-developed countries from the traditional to the more progressive and modern sector of economy.

SOME DEFINITIONS OF URBANIZATION

Many definitions of urbanization have been given over the years, some profound, some pretentious. Here are few:

- a) In English speaking countries, this term refers vaguely to a process of urban growth (some time of all medium and larger towns) at the expenses of rural populations. It thus is mainly a demographic idea that is very informative respecting societal institutions or their changes. In countries speaking Roman languages, urbanization refers to the creation of infrastructures of streets, sewers, water and lighting systems, transport and housing appropriate to a city.¹
- b) Urbanization to quote the Encyclopedia of Social Sciences is characterized by movement of people from small communities, concerned chiefly or solely with agriculture, to other communities generally larger, whose activities are primarily entered in Government trade, manufacture or allied interests.²
- c) Urbanization simply stated means proportionally faster growth of the urban population relative to the rural population.³
- d) According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica urbanization refers to the process by which a population becomes concentrated in cities or urban places. This process may proceed in either of two distinct ways: a) through an increase in the number of urban places or b) through an increase in the size of the population resident in each urban place.⁴

BRIEF HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Urbanized societies represent a fundamental step in main social evolution. Cities first appeared several thousand years ago. However, in the beginning they were surrounded by an overwhelming majority of rural people and relapsed easily to village or small town status. The societies of today in contrast not only have urban agglomerations of very large sizes but also have a high proportion concentrated in cities. This is a recent development and has proceeded at rapid pace.

Before 1850 no society was predominantly urbanized and by 1900 only Great Britain could be so regarded.⁵ Today all the industrialized nations

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It is mainly resistance to change which is deep-rooted in human nature that stands in the way of improvement. Traditions, customs, habits of thoughts, religion, have a tight hold on their minds. These ties were strong in the past, people usually accepted their environment and social position and attempted to adjust to customs with little or no thought of seeking better prospects.

Now the resistance built through centuries has begun to crumble and has paved the way for a process of change because man's mind is more receptive than ever before to new ideas. Thus the individual has shown greater inclination to strive for a better life by modifying his environment. This change of attitude essentially leads to a desire to improve which probably can be realized by migration to places where opportunities exist.

iii) SOCIAL REASONS

Life in village, which is nothing more than a stereotype existence encumbered with customs, traditions and austerity, is ultimately a distracting factor. The onerous demands of well-knit families of parental authority of the status pattern, and of hard life of labour, leave no room for individual freedom and development. Hence there is normally a lurking desire in the villager to escape. The freedom of the city, as contrasted with the rigidity of rural mores, increase the attraction of urban life.

Another factor which is responsible for the villagers to leave their narrow and parochial home is free hand to indulge in their personal pursuits in the cities. Again, absence of facilities like medical care, educational and recreational opportunities, proper housing, electricity, water system, sewerage and transport facilities etc, are conducive to the migration of rural population. It is the young who usually migrates to cities, being more easily dis-satisfied with the village life. Men are more enterprising than women.

FOCUS ON SOME LEADING EFFECTS OF URBANIZATION

All social problems are more or less the social effects of urbanization. Every social effect is the product of maladjustment of the individual with the environment. Some of the social effects of urbanization in Pakistan are discussed as under:

I. HOUSING

The most visible problem of urbanization in Pakistan pertains to housing. Low income families are unable to obtain decent housing with adequate amenities, specially water and sewerage. People live in conditions of overcrowding and ill-health, huddled together in squalid and in-sanitary surroundings. Migration continues unabated and the new city dwellers find

are highly urbanized and this process is increasing rapidly throughout the world. Further, it is the great increase in Asian urban population during the current century that has maintained the rapid increase of world urban population.

The rise of British Rule in Indo-Pak sub-continent marked the advent of an industrialized economy which created new type of cities. These new cities attracted more people than ever before. Since independence, mainly parts of Pakistan have gained a tempo of urbanization with rapid industrialization.

PUSH FORCES IN URBANIZATION

The forces that impel the village population towards the cities are numerous, and vary from time to time. In the past war epidemic famine, floods, etc have played a role in urbanization. But there are some forces which consistently and clearly exercise an uprooting effect upon the villages.

i) ECONOMIC REASONS

In all countries where a rapid expansion of manufacturing and commerce has taken place, a large scale migration from countryside to the cities has occurred.

Since each person tries to better his lot, prospects of material welfare is a sufficient inducement for him to go to the cities, where undoubtedly the standard of living is better than in the villages. The cities not only hold more glamorous attractions but greater economic opportunities. The villages on the other hand, have become stifled with the growing pressure of population on land, an increase in rural debt, lack of rural industries and a constant under-employment. In cities industry is an immediate economic attraction for the under-paid or un-employed villager.⁶

The industrial boom has a constant demand for labour and villagers are the main provinces of this demand. Higher wages in urban occupations furnish a particularly strong motive for migration. Under-employment in agriculture also serves as a strong factor driving the population out.

ii) PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS

Attitude is the basic element which moulds life of human beings.⁷ It is an admitted fact that not every individual who has an opportunity to achieve a higher standard of living through migration, desires to migrate. Again it is not necessarily in the poorest agricultural districts that the impulse to move to the cities is the strongest. In many countries the main sources of rural-urban migration have often been areas where the per capita output of agricultural labour was relatively high. Therefore, economic factors operate within the framework of psychological factors.

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it more and more difficult to afford the rising cost of the housing. Due to this situation, a major effect is the existence of slums-dirty crowded poor areas- in our towns and cities. The problems these slums create for our urban society are many. Crimes against person or property, sex misbehaviour, drug peddling, quarrels and fights- these and many more flow naturally from such conditions of living.

It will be unrealistic to hope that people living in such dismal condition can preserve sense of any value. With increasing flow of migrants were added to those slums the innumerable "jhuggies or Mushroom huts", making worse the worst. Adequate housing programme is, therefore, a most important social need of our rapidly expanding urban areas.

Another aspect of this problem is living together of a large number of people in a single room or single enclosed space. Parents, their married and unmarried children, adult and minor, male and female and sometimes relatives, all live together in a single room. It is hard to imagine a more unsatisfactory way of living. The social consequences of such indiscriminately mixed living are well-known.

Land is the first pre-requisite for urban house-building in most cities of Pakistan. Its prices have touched fantastically high levels which are beyond the reach of all except a few. Effective steps including a maximum ceiling for urban land holdings are needed to bring this situation under control.

To promote social harmony, housing colonies must comprise plot size and cater to the needs of low as well as middle income groups. Only a small percentage of these plots may be sold at fixed prices. On the rest, houses of approved design and specifications should be built by public authorities, enterprises, banks and insurance companies. As for the occupiers of such houses, they may acquire them as they can afford on rent or instalments or hire-purchase or outright purchase.

2. EDUCATION CRISIS

While technology is a tool to bring about development, education is its medium. But the present situation of education in Pakistan is causing concern to the professionals and laymen alike. Education is in fact in a state of crisis which is deepening as the time passes. The crisis is being felt at all levels viz Primary, Secondary, University, Technical and Vocational. It is evident from the imbalance in demand and supply of school premises in big cities as well as in small towns.

Overcrowded class-rooms, overworked teachers, double shifts, inadequate teaching materials, ill-equipped laboratories and workshops generally poorly stuffed, absence of libraries, lack of books, lack of proper

facilities for W.Cs, playgrounds and drinking water are some of the usual sights in Schools of Pakistan.^B The restriction on admission creates frustration. In addition to this, the cost per student is rising, the system's efficiency is declining and our meagre resources are not giving appropriate return.

Due to urbanization and lack of educational opportunities in rural areas, mobility towards population centres is also responsible for fantastic enrolment growth in Pakistani towns and cities. This trend has continued for years but educational facilities have not kept pace with ever increasing needs, resulting in crowded conditions in schools. Year after year, the harassed and hopeless parents flock to the same school for admission of more and more children without realizing that there is a limit to absorb the overflowing student population in the existing schools. Alternate solutions available for tiding over the difficulties of crowding in schools have been attempted simultaneously in all schools and all situations. But no consideration has been given to the alternatives- Increase in class size, half-day or double shift schools, shortening of the school day- in their application.

A number of operational problems have emerged as a result of containing too many students in small buildings. Traffic bottlenecks in corridors, staircases and entrance and exit of class rooms in schools have developed, delaying students in passing to classes and creating hazards for safety. Supervision of students is becoming more and more difficult as the Head Master/Principal and staff are over strained. Assemblies are a problem and special facilities like clinic, canteens, playgrounds, libraries and laboratories have lost their significance in school programme.

The most distressing effects of crowded schools are being felt in relation to instruction. Teachers are depending more and more on lecture method and dictating notes to their classes. Effective teaching time varies between 20/25 minutes per period as at least 10 minutes out of 30/35 minutes are spent in allowing the overflowing class to settle down.

Most serious problem is the development of negative attitude among teachers, parents, students, educational administrators and community at large.

3. TRANSPORT PROBLEM

Because of rapid urbanization in Pakistan the transport problem is very serious. In big cities like Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar or Quetta travelling is not pleasant or easy. Heavy concentration of population and economic activity entails intensive movements of goods and services in the urban area. Millions of people have to be fed and supplied their needs and have to be moved between the place of residence and place of work. Besides, there are other demands relating to travel for recreation,

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social and cultural reasons. The greatest transport difficulties are, however, experienced in the mass movements between place of residence and employment during the morning and evening rush. It is evident that housing on the premises of work is out of question for a vast majority. It is also evident that all of them cannot own means of transport of their own.

The peak hours rush is relatively short, in the morning, afternoon and evening. During these hours extreme congestions result from heavy traffic. The awful overcrowding in buses and transit railways makes it a human problem. Huge crowds at bus stops and the people packed in the buses and hanging precariously on the foot-boards are a pitiful sight.

Those who can afford to do without mass transit and use private cars have to face the ordeal of driving on extremely congested streets which are generally narrow, poorly built and ill-maintained. In old established cities, these facilities are proving absolutely inadequate to meet the growing needs of traffic, parking and terminal operations.

In some urban areas, various segments of the road network happen to be under different administrative jurisdictions. This creates almost insurmountable difficulties in developing and maintaining an adequate street system. Poor roads are a major cause of traffic bottlenecks, accidents, high cost of vehicle operation and low overall mobility. Frequently, there are serious traffic jams, particularly during peak hours, which means frustrating delays in movement and poor utilization of high speed vehicles. The confusion is worse confounded by the presence of slow moving vehicles on the same roads. Naturally, the rate of road accidents has been rising alarmingly.

As the trends indicate, the situation is likely to aggravate in the years ahead.

4. TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Traffic accidents cause some of the most hideous social problems. Every traffic accident that kills or maims a man or a woman begets a social problem. Traffic accidents are inescapable legacy of the avalanche of urbanization which is sweeping through Pakistan and the rest of the world.⁹ In spite of man's best efforts to put a stop to traffic accidents, the high way continues to take shockingly heavy toll of human life.

The bright-eyed child who is maimed for the rest of his life by speeding truck, the promising young artist who is crippled by a way-ward car, the veiled old woman who loses her eyesight from a glass splinter when the bus dashes against an electric pole or plunges into an open drain—such are multitudes of wrecked lives that traffic accidents leave behind in their trail of woe and suffering.¹⁰ Thus traffic accidents, as a result

of monopoly of private vehicles, careless driving, non-cooperation of the drivers in sharing the road, violation of traffic rules and regulations and lust for accumulation of wealth etc, are not the concern of police alone; they affect society as a whole.

The crying need of the hour is the establishment of a voluntary Agency for the relief of the victims of traffic accidents. Such an agency should cooperate with the police in the process of social education of the driver and the pedestrian to prevent traffic accidents. Its social work staff should rush to the place of traffic accident and help in securing medical care for the victim. If he is dead, the voluntary agency staff should work with the police in locating his relatives and making arrangement of his burial.

5. URBANIZATION AND CRIME

Just as the whole social outlook and way of life of a people undergo a drastic change in an urban society, the crime also suffers a metamorphosis.¹¹ The main change in the criminal outlook as a result of urbanization is the sophistication of crime and criminal. The "Grab, hit and run" tactics of a highway robber in a primitive society and a sudden impulse to violence of a villager give way to artifice and subterfuge, proceeded by cool thinking of an urban criminal.¹² Offences like pick-pocketing, confidence tricks, blackmailing, robbery, looting and cheating are the typical crimes of sophisticated society.

An important fact of urbanization is that surplus labour from rural areas is attracted to the city in search of better employment. A large number of immigrants from Bangladesh, Srilanka and Afghanistan can also be added to this fact. Not every one finds a job. A fairly large number remains unemployed, at least for some time. When some of them do not find gainful employment they, in desperation, indulge in criminal activities. In an urban society, constant changes in rented houses occupied by the criminals give them chance to commit crimes and keep themselves out of police eyes, in addition to looting of houses which remain unattended during day time. Another aspect is the servant problem in cities.

True statistics for crime are not available as most of the cases of non-conformity are not reported to police due to socio-cultural environment and unhealthy atmosphere prevalent in our country. Increase of crimes affects society socio-psychologically and economically. For these reasons crime rate in Pakistan is increasing day by day.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The rapid urbanization that is taking place in Pakistan is a phenomenon which is being commonly experienced in almost all the developing countries. Urbanization is not only a movement of people from rural to urban areas, in the case of underdeveloped countries it is simultaneously a movement from the traditional to the more progressive and modern sector of economy.

In Pakistan, the process of urbanization has gained momentum in recent years. In many ways this process is a hinderance rather than a help to social and economic progress. This accelerated urbanization poses a number of social problems. Overcrowding, worsening of the housing situation, emergence of slums with all their infections and baneful effects, unemployment, poverty, social injustice education problems, crimes, juvenile delinquency, lack of health, transport, electricity, and sanitary arrangements etc are some of the leading social effects of urbanization in Pakistan.

To meet and solve these effects, it will depend on the assembly of a critical mass of multidisciplinary talents including economists, educationists, engineers, planners, architects, sociologists and administrators, a broad range of physical life and behavioural scientists. It will also require creation of new institutions and changes in established ways of doing things in existing institutions.

Furthermore, urban development is one of those phenomena which requires the support of the people more than any programme. Our government or public organizations are not rich enough to meet the ever-increasing cost of such programmes. Therefore participation of the people in these programmes is a must.

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