

Introduction

K. ISHWARAN

Karnatak University, India

HERE is a book of readings on urbanism and urbanization, the theoretical and illustrative articles of which focus on the central purpose of an encompassing, penetrating and satisfying understanding of these phenomena.

The two terms, urbanism and urbanization, are not mere evocative terms used in the vocabulary of sociology, but dynamic concepts denoting the life of the modern man who is in the grip of modernization. For thousands of years the majority of the people in the world were living a relatively quiet and isolated earth-bound life in their rural setting as if theirs was a static society. But the industrialism that suddenly appeared in the 18–19th centuries infused dynamism into tradition-bound people and provided no leeway to their return to the earlier quietude. Industrialism, coupled with urbanism, has been bringing different peoples together and to shaping their way of life into a set pattern. Diversity of culture was the life-blood of the peasantry. But now it is becoming uniform for modern industrial urban communities. People who were, in earlier times, exposed to and directly depending on physical forces were inevitably made to adopt themselves to the existing natural environment with only slight modifications. Thus, the diverse physical conditions prevalent in different parts of the world had, to a great extent, influenced the process of shaping the way of life of man. But in the modern age, man with his scientific knowledge and tools has been able to control the various natural forces and to convert the physical resources into useful services in accordance with his ideas. Thus, it is science instead of nature that dominates in influencing the human way of living to-day. And the industrial urban way is the direct result of science.

Perhaps, by stating it thus we are over-simplifying the situation. The urban way of living is not a new phenomenon. Cities, the centres of urban living, had a high status in ancient days and also their influence was quite conspicuous. Centres of learning, commerce, fine arts, administration, judiciary, innovations etc. were located in urban communities as they are also to-day. But we have to admit that there is a lot of difference. There has been a greater movement of people from rural to urban areas, and the process of urbanization, therefore, has been accelerated with the increased means of transport, communications, the rapid spreading of machine-made commodities, and the mechanization of agriculture. In ancient days, cities were few and smaller in

size, and their influence was rather heavily restricted. There was social intercourse, of course, through which little and great cultures could meet and exchange ideas, values and ways of living. But in modern times, as the level of industrialization is rising, the urbanization of the rural structure is becoming widespread and percolating, in an unimaginable ways, into social services thus affecting the deeply rooted traditional ways of living.

Studies on tribal, rural and urban communities show that there has always been contact between these three major forms of human habitat. In their economic, religious, political and other social organizations, the people had exhibited differential characteristics in accordance with the form of community they were living in. Not only were there differences between these three forms but there were also greater divergences between the same form of communities of different cultures. For instance the agriculturists who inhabited smaller settlements, the little communities, in different parts of the world had different social structures. Similarly, cities in the West were different from those in the East. This kind of difference between tribal, rural and urban communities on the one hand and the divergences between the same type of communities on the other showed cultural divergences, evidences for regional variations and traditions of those communities, which in no way barred, many a time, fruitful and friendly, interactions between them. But this assumption does not mean to gainsay that there were common traits that could link different types of communities into a complex network of relationships. In fact, scientists have been successful in establishing the continuum that exists between the three major types of communities. Besides people of similar occupation, like agriculturists, all over the world are found to have been sharing, in a large measure, a similar way of living.

But industrialism, which ushered in the realm of production and distribution of goods and services, has revolutionized not only the economic organization but also the entire social organization of mankind. Though it has only a history of not more than two hundred years, unlike urbanism, which has a history of thousands of years tracing back to the cities at Mahenjodaro and Harappa in the Indian subcontinent, industrialism has been quite vigorous in bringing different people, with their divisions and sub-divisions, various values and interests, divergent attitudes and ambitions and their long and short histories, together; it has been breaking community boundaries by introducing dynamism into every aspect of human life all over the world. People in Europe and America, in Africa and Asia, are exposed to similar, if not the same, modern forces and are experiencing similar and, many a time, the same problems of modern industrial urban living. This would lead us to conclude that insular communities are being submerged into a greater community, that is, the world community, urbanism being the life-force of that community. This process, which is full of dynamic forces, has been shaking traditional cultures to their roots and thus arousing problems of maladjustment, unemployment, overcrowding, slum areas, group conflicts, large-scale migration etc.

With his scientific knowledge and tools, man has been, no doubt, successful

in changing the entire life of the world. But he has to realize that, in the wake of industrialism and urbanization, severe problems are corroding his life. It is, therefore, essential to understand the divergent cultural situations at different levels in their transitional conditions, and the difficulties that the people are suffering from the breaking up of boundaries of community, which, in return, is affecting the vital threads of social structure. Sociologists in different parts of the world are trying to comprehend the nature and extent of urbanism against tradition and to assess the impact of industrialism on urban and rural communities. They have found that the process of urbanization has been accelerated because of the intensity of centrifugal and centripetal forces. Since the world of tomorrow is going to be essentially an industrial urban community, which at the same time means that there would be little difference between different communities in it, it is highly desirable that a multidimensional perspective and collective effort is made to understand to-day's cities for the good of man.

Here in this volume eminent scholars in the field of industrial and urban sociology have come together to give a comparative picture of urbanism and urbanization. There are theoretical discussions, historical narrations, suggestions for urban planning and development, and case studies from different parts of the world, – South East Asia, Australia, India, Latin America, Scandinavia and the United States of America. Each article has its own distinctive approach, conceptually, regionally or both. They all focus, however, on the same central purpose: a more encompassing, penetrating and satisfying understanding of urbanism and urbanization.

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