Department of Sociology

North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong

SAP-DSA-I

National Seminar, 14-15 February, 2019

Concept Note

Urbanization in India: Issues and Predicaments

The process of urbanization and industrialization are two fundamental forces which tend to bring about rapid changes in the social system of urban society. Of late, urban societies are witnessing rapid changes which are prominently visible in urban ecology, urban economy and class structure. The formation of ethnic clusters in urban settings, nature of social and cultural interactions among the different classes and ethnic groups have brought enormous diversities in urban social landscape. Urban congestion, sustainability of cities, modern amenities, desire for high quality of life are the issues which have thrown challenges to the city planners to make policies and devise appropriate strategies to address the predicaments of the city centres.

Urban issues and problems can be perceived from diverse theoretical perspectives such as historical, ecological and developmental. Classical scholars in sociology such as Marx, Weber, Tonnies, Simmel have enriched this domain of knowledge through their insightful writings. There are models such as sectors model, multiple nuclei model, concentric zone model and exploitative model which have offered insightful explanations to study the urban structure and growth pattern of cities. The seminal ideas of these scholars such as Marx’s idea of urbanization under capitalism, Weber’s notion of city and market economy and the importance of rational legal institutions to govern the modern city, Tonnies’ analysis on impact of market economy on traditional forms of social association, Simmel’s money economy and its impact on social life help to understand the structure and growth of urban centres. Burgess’s, concentric zone model explains the nature and dynamics of urban structure as city centres expand to different concentric circles besides describing the process of concentration and segregation of social groups of city structure. Louis Wirth has advocated theoretical formulations to understand various intricacies of urban life. Wirth’s thesis on urbanism as a way of life shows how the larger, denser and heterogeneous population of an area determine the nature and intensity of life style of the people. A high degree of heterogeneity of city population results in the emergence of new culture which is characterised by the role segmentation, anonymity, lack of primary relations besides creating conditions for intense individualistic competition.Park’s human ecology theory argues that an increase in population size within the given area together with an extension of transport and communication networks result in greater specialisation of functions**.**

The process of urbanization in India dates back to Harappan civilization which showed the glimpses of urban dwelling and urbanism. Since then cities of different size, dimension and nature have grown. Better transport and communication system, revolutionary change in ICT (Information, Communication Technology), increasing trend in rural-urban migration have given a new impetus to the urbanization process in India. Many developmental activities such as comprehensive plan for the growth of cities, growth of infrastructure, spreading up of urban centres in peripheries have widened the urban space. The physical differences between rural and urban are shrinking, thus giving way to the notion of rurbanization. The cities are linked to the mobile capital and cutting edge technology. The growing emphasis on the idea of smart city could be seen as an effort in this direction. The importance which is being given to smart cities signifies the sustainable urban planning and systematic city management within a new pattern of governance. This pattern of governance gives increasing emphasis to sustainable urban development - a space that provides healthy and safe environment that include a healthy and hygienic living environment, water supply, sanitation, drainage system, etc.

It is therefore, pertinent to examine the diverse processes of social change that urban society is passing through. As the plurality of urban society (multicultural and multi-ethnic setup) is a crucial issue, it provides enough scope and opportunities to scholars to engage with the issues such as changes that have taken place in the social, cultural, economic and religious life of the city dwellers in general and migrants from the rural to urban areas in particular. While urban centres have grown, it has also brought many problems. Cities have faced problems such as slum, urban crime, pollution, etc.

Keeping the importance of the theme and its contemporary relevance in mind, the seminar is planned to ponder over diverse issues relating to urbanization and urbanism. The seminar aims to reflect on the pressing issues that emanate from the rapid growth of urbanization in India. Some of the issues which will be pondered over and addressed in this seminar include: inequality in urban centres, nature and dynamics of migration to urban centres, slum problem, issues relating to urban poverty, residential pattern and employment opportunities.

**Sub themes**

I Urbanization: Theoretical and Conceptual Issues

II Emergence of Urban Centres in India: Past and Present

III Urban Issues

1. Migration
2. Urban Planning
3. Smart Cities
4. Urban Governance
5. Tourism
6. Future Prospects

IV Urban Problems and Challenges

1. Social Problems
2. Economic Problems
3. Logistic Problems
4. Housing
5. Sanitation
6. Transport
7. Crime
8. Environmental Concerns

V. Urbanization in the Context of North-East India

1. Physiographical Problems
2. Problems of Hill Cities
3. Ethnic Clusters
4. Prospects

**Guidelines for Contributors**

* 1. Abstract (within 200 words) should reach the undersigned on or before October, 3rd, 2018.
  2. Full length paper should reach on or before 15th January, 2019.
  3. Paper presenters should clearly indicate particulars such as name, designation, contact number and their institutional affiliation.
  4. Acceptance of the paper abstract will be communicated to the paper presenters by the 10th October, 2018 through email.
  5. Accommodation for outstation participants will be arranged at the University guest house within the campus.
  6. All communications related to sending of abstracts, full papers or any other information should be made to the Convener or the Co-Convener of the seminar at the following email address and contact no.

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