Small Towns-Facts and Problems

I P Desai

To study urbanisation, we ask two questions:
(a) What is the process by which the growth of cities and towns takes place?
(b) What are the factors that set the process in motion?

An attempt is made here to consider the second question.

In order to perform all these roles, certain pre-requisites are necessary. Small towns must be large in number. Their geographical location should be such as would facilitate the reception and spread of urban influence. They must also have a sizable population. This is one area of the study of small towns. The second and more difficult area of study is to determine the character of the town in sociological terms. This would mean determining the meaning of urban and rural. We have until now attacked this problem indirectly, via technology, economy, demography and geography; these studies are useful, and they need to be coordinated with the sociological approach. The sociological approach would mean study with reference to kinship groups and relations, stratification system, nature of occupational relations, the distribution of power and the general world-view or specific values and beliefs. It is possible that the distinction between the urban and rural may turn out to be more meaningful in terms of the traditional culture and society and the non-traditional or modern culture and society.

Cult towns are looked upon as offering a wholesome contrast and as a counter to the undesirable effects of the large industrial cities such as bad living conditions, anonymity and anomie. They are also regarded as favourable locations for decentralised industries, with both rural and urban characteristics and thus combining the best of both the worlds. Sociologically, they are believed to be the spring-boards for larger cities and sub-stations for the spread of the influence of larger cities, i.e., urbanization of rural areas. It is because of these and such other supposed roles of the small towns that their study is considered to be important.

From the above table, it will be seen that in 1961 there are 107 cities in Class I, i.e., with a population of 1,000,000 and more. But, if we observe the breakdown of Class I, then there are only seven cities with a population of one million.

### Table 1: Number and Population of Towns in 1951 and 1961 arranged in Six Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>1951 Total Population</th>
<th>1961 Total Population</th>
<th>Increase or Decrease in No. of Towns</th>
<th>Increase or Decrease in Population of Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Towns</td>
<td>No. of Towns</td>
<td>No. of Towns</td>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>Increase or Decrease in No. of Towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Cities with one million and above population</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>35,110,251</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>23,725,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Cities with 500,000 to 999,999 population</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14,232,513</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7,889,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Cities with 100,000 to 499,999 population</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,244,365</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3,118,543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000 to 100,000</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>17,633,373</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>12,716,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000 to 50,000</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>9,625,724</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>7,514,968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class IV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 to 20,000</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>15,650,419</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>11,135,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 to 10,000</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>11,257,580</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>9,290,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 5,000</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>6,312,390</td>
<td>1,189</td>
<td>8,471,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VII</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 5,000</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>879,375</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>2,108,654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>2,690</td>
<td>78,835,939</td>
<td>3,057</td>
<td>62,276,729</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Census tables in this paper are from Paper No 1 of 1962. 1961 Census of India.
Distinctive and durable

dhoties

MAFATLAL GROUP

NEW SHORROCK (SHORROCK), Ahmedabad.
MV SHORROCK, Vadodara.
STANDARD, Bombay.
STANDARD NEW CHINA, Bombay.
STANDARD, New Delhi.
SASSOON, Bombay.
SASSOON (NEW UNION), Bombay.
SURAT COTTON, Surat.
MAFATLAL FINE, Navsari.
and more, and the cities with a population between half a million and one million are only five, while the cities with a population between one lakh and five lakhs are 95. It is also interesting to observe that there are four cities with a population between 500,000 and 1,000,000 each in 1951. Even in 1951, the largest number of cities, 66, had populations between 100,000 and 500,000. There were III Class II cities in 1951, and 141 in 1961, 375 Class III cities in 1951, and 515 in 1961; 670 class IV cities in 1951 and 817 in 1961. The number of towns in classes V and VI decreased between 1951 and 1961, due to the change in the definition.

It will also be seen from the table that in Class I, the largest number of cities are those with a population between one lakh and five lakhs. Though the cities with population of one million and above were only 7, the total number of inhabitants in them was more by 14 lakhs than the total population of the 95 cities with a population between one lakh and five lakhs.

It is also interesting to observe that the total number of inhabitants in 141 cities of Class II is less than the total number of inhabitants in Class III and Class IV each. Also, the absolute increase in the number of Class III and Class IV towns is very nearly the same (141 and 147) and it is much more than the increase in the number of towns in Class II (30). Due to definitional change both the number of towns and the total number of inhabitants of Class V and VI towns considerably decreased in 1961. However, towns of Class V contain 8 per cent of the total urban population in 1961 and Class VI has only 1.1 per cent of the total urban population. The towns of Class V and VI contain 8 per cent of the total urban population. Thus in 1961, Classes III and IV put together have 34 per cent of the total population. Thus, as compared with the cities of class II and cities with a population between 0.5 and 1 million in class I and the small towns of classes V and VI, the towns of class III and IV seem to be significant both from the point of view of the number of towns and the population inhabiting them. I think, there is sufficient evidence to consider (Mass xliii, 1961 Census Paper I of 1962).

More important is the information given by the 1961 census on the movement of cities and towns from one class to another.

In 1961, nearly 28 per cent of cities from Class II in 1951 went into Class I, 15 per cent of cities from Class III went into Class IV, 24.8 per cent of the towns from Class IV went into Class III and 21.3 per cent of towns from Class V went into Class IV while about 15 per cent from Class VI went into Class V. (See Statement 37, p xliii, 1961 Census Paper I of 1962).

The following observations could be made from the above data:

1. The cities and towns do not go from higher to lower class ranges by a process of decrent. Such a process is observable only in class III, IV and V towns, but it is negligible. The decrease in class V and VI is due to the definitional change.

2. The increase in the number of cities and towns of each class is as a rule by the process of growth. The cities and towns which flourish in this way are those from Class I to Class IV. But we should remember that the net gain in terms of the number of towns and the population shown by the towns between one lakh and five lakhs in class I and the towns of class II is not much. Therefore, the growth of the towns of class III and IV will remain the centre of our attention for the study of urbanisation.

If we want to study urbanisation, we have to ask two questions: First, what is the process by which the growth of towns and cities takes place? Second, what are the factors that set the process in motion? One way to answer the questions is the study of census data and the other is to institute special inquiries by selecting particular towns to answer specific questions. We do not ask the first question in this paper. In the next section we ask the question, how does the growth of cities come about.

II

The general process by which cities and towns with large populations grow larger has two elements: natural growth and growth due to in-migration. We cannot talk about this point on an all-India basis so long as we do not have the demographic and migration tables. Even after we have them, special studies will have to be designed for our purpose. Census will give us the broad categories. In this regard, the following general observations from my own study of Mahuva, a Class III town in Saurashtra, may be of some interest. Fifty-five per cent of the population of the town has been living there from before 1900 and 15 per cent settled between 1900 and 1930 and 30 per cent during the last 25 years, that is, between 1931 and 1956. The following observations on migration into the town can be made from the data that we have.

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**Table 2: Proportion of Population in Each Class of Town to Total Urban Population in 1961 and 1951**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Union Territory: INDIA</th>
<th>Over 1 Million</th>
<th>0.5 to 1 Million</th>
<th>0.1 to 0.5 Million</th>
<th>Total of Class 1</th>
<th>Class II</th>
<th>Class III</th>
<th>Class IV</th>
<th>Class V</th>
<th>Class VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18.05</td>
<td>12.67</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>22.37</td>
<td>20.42</td>
<td>44.54</td>
<td>38.10</td>
<td>12.21</td>
<td>12.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Shalimar Lustrol

Lustrol aluminium paint offers a high covering capacity and a protective, glittering finish. It provides an impervious moisture barrier that repels corrosive agents, withstands high temperatures without blistering, scaling or turning black. Ideal for painting and protecting storage tanks, machinery, bridges, railings, roofs, pipes, etc. Lustrol, like every Shalimar paint offers you the sum of four decisive elements — resources, research, know-how, quality-control — which combine to give you unsurpassed quality and performance.

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(1) The number of rural immigrants is larger than the number of urban immigrants.

(2) Rural immigrants decrease in number as the distance from the town increased. There are practically no immigrants from rural areas outside Saurashtra.

(3) In the case of urban immigrants, it can be observed that they came in equal numbers from longer distances from within Saurashtra and areas outside Gujarat State. The urban migrants, thus, move much longer distances than do rural migrants.

(4) The above point is corroborated by an examination of the relatives of the inhabitants of Mahuva who are residing outside Mahuva and who are maintaining relations with the residents in Mahuva. The percentage of relatives in rural areas is very small (12 per cent) and a little less than that percentage is in the urban areas within Saurashtra. But, the largest percentage (30 per cent) is in the areas outside Gujarat State, i.e., outside their own language area.

About 60 per cent of the immigrants halted at one place before they came to Mahuva. About 24 per cent moved through two places and about 16 per cent came to Mahuva after moving through three or more than three places.

Most of these people said that they wanted to settle permanently in Mahuva. Only five per cent said that they did not intend to settle permanently in Mahuva. About 10 per cent of the total sample said that they are not likely to settle permanently in Mahuva.

Literacy and Occupation

Thirty-eight per cent of the population owned their own houses, about 4.0 per cent of the population lived in the houses of their employees and 58 per cent lived in the rented houses. Forty-three per cent of the residents have not changed their houses even once. Thirty-five per cent have changed them only once. About 12 per cent have changed twice and about 10 per cent four or more than four times. Forty-seven per cent of them lived in the same house for more than 15 years; 12 per cent for between 10-15 years and 11 per cent from 5 to 10 years and 28 per cent for 5 or less than 5 years in the same house.

Literacy is very low in the town. Thirty-four per cent of the heads are illiterate; 31 per cent have studied up to vernacular IV standard; 32 per cent have gone up to English schools, but have not passed their school-leaving matriculation examination; about 3.0 per cent are matriculates and graduates are only 0.5 per cent. The occupational distribution of the heads of the family is also consistent with their educational equipment. Twenty-one per cent of them are unskilled manual workers; 18 per cent are skilled manual workers; 5.0 per cent are doing skilled technical supervisory work. About 7.0 per cent live by tilling land or own land. About 25 per cent live by doing small and big business and only 6.0 per cent are clerks and shop assistants.

The majority of the people live within the area of their own castes or in clusters of their own castes in other areas. Nearly 80 per cent of the people live in their own caste and religious groups; 38 per cent of them live in three or more than three-generation families. About 20 per cent of them live in joint families which are not three-generation families. But they are not the husband, wife and unmarried children group; they contain other relatives, who do not add to generation depth.

Social Structure

This very brief picture of the town is given with a view to drawing attention to the items that may be considered for determining the character of the town in terms of social structure. We can make the following observations:

(1) As distinguished from the rural area, a small town in addition to long settled people, has also migrants of different durations of stay. The differences of the duration of stay of migrants might also distinguish it from a bigger city.

(2) The ownership of houses will also distinguish the small town both from the rural area and the bigger city.

(3) The frequency of changing the residence will be negligible in rural areas. It will be more in the small town but probably less than in bigger town.

(4) In a small town, the residential pattern is likely to be caste and religion based as in rural areas, while in a big city, it may not be so.

(5) The small town and the rural area are not likely to differ in the distribution of residually joint households and kinship relationships. But the big cities might show a difference in this regard.

(6) The occupational structure of the small town and the rural area will show marked difference. The single largest occupation as an activity and a source of livelihood for more than 75 per cent of population in rural areas will be agriculture. In the small town, agriculture may be absent or negligible as a source of livelihood, but it may differ from the big city in that respect*. It may not have a big white collar salaried class and industrial workers working in big industrial factories and workshops employing large number of workers.

Quantitative Comparisons

Not Enough

How will these similarities and differences in the social structure of a small town help us in distinguishing the rural area from the small town and ultimately the urban? Quantitative comparisons will give us an idea of the difference and therefore they are necessary. But they will not be adequate and decisive, unless we are able to arrive at the degree of difference that will distinguish the urban from the rural. This may or may not be possible. Even if it is possible, it means that the quantitative difference at that point passes into the qualitative difference. We will, therefore, have, to take into account also the qualitative difference. One of the terms by which rural and urban are qualitatively distinguished is the way of life. But, it will also be difficult to quantify the way of life as a whole. If we take the idea underlying it, that would mean the differences in terms of behaviour or action. Our question, therefore, will be: what difference do the similarities and differences between urban areas of different sizes and rural areas make with reference to the actions of the people of the

* In 1961, the Census recorded 1.175 towns with a total population of 89,04,919 as predominantly agricultural but they are likely to be towns of class V, i.e., with less than 10,000 population.
respective areas. We can attempt to answer this question by inquiring into the relations between the different parts of the structure in the rural and urban areas. Let us take, for illustration, migration.

Impart of Migration

Migration would disturb the given equilibrium, e.g., the relation between the groups — e.g., the linguistic, religious, occupational and caste groups. In the rural area, we may find the different castes distributed over different occupations. Now, when the migrants come in large numbers, they are believed to disturb that relationship between caste and occupation. The possibility of this disturbance presupposes that the migrants are in large numbers and that their cultural and social characteristics, such as religion, language, education, caste, occupation are different from those of the new town. In other words, migration can be responsible for cosmopolitanism. Because of the differences in these characteristics, the migrants break the relationship between the caste, occupation, and the pattern of settlement etc. It follows from this that we must also inquire into these cultural and social characteristics of the migrants. Now, on this point, our information from one town (Mahuva) is that the immigrants are largely from the rural and urban areas surrounding it. The urban areas from which they come are also not urban in the sense of being a big city, i.e., not very different from a small town. Our point of inquiry, therefore, will be how far the opportunities of employment provided by the varieties of occupations are availed of and the possibilities of breaking the type of relationship between caste and occupation in rural areas, are actually realized. If they are actually realized, then that makes a difference between the rural and urban area.

My observation on this point is that in this small town, Mahuva, the relationship between caste and pattern of settlement still obtains. The caste-consciousness and cohesion is not broken. Also, we have observed that the kinship sentiment is quite strong in Mahuva. Consequently, we could find the distribution of various castes over different occupations in the same manner as in rural areas — that is, concentration of one caste in a given occupation and choice of occupation related to the status of the caste.

Another interesting aspect of the occupational activities was that only about 27 per cent of the employees were even in theory governed by the non-traditional or modern rules. The industrial and business units had nothing to compare with a modern factory or business house either in organization or size.

Education equips a person to take up a particular type of occupation. Now, if education is confined to certain castes only, as in Mahuva, it may break the given relationship between the caste and occupation, but will re-establish it in relation to new occupations. The caste cohesiveness and group orientation of the people will help in this. But the consequences of the occupational differentiations within the caste will have to be observed.

The proportion of immigrants, a higher literacy rate, and the variety of occupation in a small town can be taken as its distinguishing features as an urban area, if they are able to break the relation between caste and pattern of settlement and occupation. If the norms governing the relations between different roles and the relations between different groups are changed, there is a qualitative break from the past traditional rural structure.

New Indigenous Ideologies

While these factors may create conditions for breach of the traditional relationship between various aspects of social structure, the inroads into the relationships are made through the growth of a group of new but indigenous ideologues who will join hands with the outsiders, i.e., the migrants. This group generally grows through persons of higher education engaged in the professions, such as lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers and persons of managerial and supervisory status. In a small town, they are generally dependent for their existence on the class enjoying economic, social and political power. This power in a small town is usually with the traditional groups. So, lastly, it is the change in the ideologies of this group that determines the character of change in the small town. The educated or the professional group — particularly the fresh entrant — is aware of the difference in the ideology and its dependence on the traditional groups. But the old members of the professions have become indistinguishable from the traditional groups. Probably within a decade or fifteen years fresh entrants become old members. My hunch is that a small town of class in terms of social structure and culture is more akin to a rural area than to an urban area, and the rate of change is very low.

Sulphur from Pyrites Ore

THE Pyrites and Chemicals Development Co has under examination a project for the production of elemental sulphur from pyrites ore. A process has been located in Finland which is at present under study and discussion. A delegation has returned recently from Finland! Members of the delegation discussed with Messrs Outokumpu Oy, the newly developed technical process with reference to its suitability for the production of elemental sulphur from Amjhowre pyrites ore.

The Pyrites and Chemicals Development Company has also under examination the global tenders for setting up a sulphuric acid plant at Sindri. The production of sulphuric acid from Amjhowre pyrites ore is a separate project and the proposed 400 tons plant will meet the partial requirements of the Sindri Fertilizer Factory and the Bihar State Superphosphate Factory.

The sites for the sulphuric acid factory and the colony at Sindri have been selected. According to the present estimates, the plant is likely to be commissioned in early 1966.

A project report on the mining scheme for the annual production of 2.4 lakh tons of pyrites ore from Amjhowre mines has been prepared by the Indian Bureau of Mines and is being considered by a committee of experts appointed for the purpose. The Company has initiated preliminary action for implementing the mining scheme on the basis of this planned target for production.