INTRODUCTION

THE THEME

Urbanization is the cumulative result of a multiplicity of transformations - economic, social, cultural, behavioral and valuational. None of these aspects of urbanization can remain unaffected by the geographical specificities of the region where it occurs. Therefore, of all the major disciplines which regard urbanization as their proper field of study, Geography affords the most comprehensive insight into this multidimensional and inter-disciplinary phenomenon. This is so because, essentially, of all the sciences - physical, biological and social - Geography is by far the most inter-disciplinary and co-relative.

Urbanization means, in a word, the concentration of a large number of people over a small number of points, a consequent change in the economic organization of the community, and more particularly in the basis of livelihood of those who have moved from countryside to the towns, in the social behaviour, cultural aspirations and philosophical outlook of these people.
The growth of urbanization in a region or a community implies a two-dimensional extension. Vertically, it means a further transformation of these centres, and horizontally it indicates an increase in the proportion of the urbanites in the total population of the community. There is also a subdued third dimension which being less easily discernible, usually gets overlooked. It is the corresponding, though mild, transformation of the village life, affecting those not attracted by the towns.

In view of these complexities, no single characteristic can help us measure the growth of urbanization over a period of time or the degree of urbanization at a point of time. The age-old and time-worn indicators—the per cent proportion of the urban to the total population appears to be much too crude and too gross to give a meaningful and realistic picture of urbanization in a region. It became imperative to develop a holistic, composite index of urbanization in order to fill in the gaps. The author has developed and applied such a composite index in the present work. Not only have the crucial characteristics of urbanization been combined in a single index, but the data generally relate to the total population rather than to only urban
population. The index thus encompasses all the three
dimensions of urbanisation noted above. Significantly,
it was noticed that all the elements of composite index,
including the per cent proportion of urban to total
population, show a strong direct correlation with one
another.

Also, depending upon the geographical back-
ground, cumulative legacy of the historical context and
the cultural philosophical outlook (including the
orientation and attitude towards technological innovations)
of the community involved, the types of forces that
basically promote urbanization vary from one situation
to another. In order to decipher the types of economic
supports of urbanization in the region the economic
structure and specialization of towns should be deeply
analysed and the trend of change therein defined. This
will provide a clue to the major supportive sectors of
economy responsible for urbanization in the region. In
fact urbanization should be viewed as a process, and,
as far as possible, the driving force as well as the
mechanism behind it should be ascertained and defined.
This makes the treatment of urbanization as a process
of economic change, or part there of most meaningful.
The economic structure of the countryside must be analysed in order to gain an insight into the factors obliging the countryfolks to migrate to the towns. It is wrong to regard all rural areas as composed of uniformly predominant agricultural sectors, with the non-agricultural sectors playing only a second fiddle. Not only does the agricultural sector vary in its predominance, but the non-agricultural sector also shows internal variations from one area to another. Besides, as the towns show rather systematic variations in their economic structure along the size spectrum, villages are also, by the same count, supposed to display similar changes from a small hamlet to a large rural service centre. Accordingly, an analysis of the economic structure of rural population must be treated a proper field of investigation in the studies of urbanization. The present study attempts to take into account the economic structure of the countryside, as well as the process of change taking place in it, owing to these assumptions.

If the process of urbanization is regarded as fundamentally an economic process then it will be most logical to establish a relationship between the change
in economic structure of towns and their growth-trends over a given period of time. One can ascertain with the help of this method as to which sectors of economy are more conducive to the dynamics of urban growth in different areas, and which others are rather passive or decadent. By relating the economic structure of the countryside of the towns and taking note of the changes therein one may move towards finding the basic supports of urbanization in the region and its relationship with the geographical personality of the region.

The present work has been conceived and designed as a micro-level study of the process of urbanization in a well-defined geographical unit, based on the assumption outlined in the foregoing.

THE REGION

The Narmada Valley, extending from 21° 22' N. to 23° 45' N. latitude and from 74° 12' E. to 80° 45' E. longitude, covers an area of 33,180 Sq.miles. The Valley is significant from the point of view of urban studies because it is one of the most urbanized parts of Madhya Pradesh and presents a great variety in geographical environment. This variety is reflected in
the site patterns, economic activities, trends of growth and other social characteristics as well as the nature of the problems being faced by the urban settlements. The Government of the state is preparing plans for the development of the valley and extensive studies are being made of various aspects of the region. The present study is an humble attempt to discover the nature of the towns, their origin, growth, distribution and present urban status.

PLAN OF THE WORK

This thesis consists of eight chapters. The first chapter is designed to bring out the geographical character and peculiarities of the region. The distribution of rural population and rural settlements are also included in this chapter.

The second chapter brings under focus the historical perspective of the region. It particularly emphasises the profound bearing that certain historical factors and developments have had upon the total urban situation of the region as it stands today.

The third chapter traces the growth-trends of urban population in the present century. In order to
obtain a total picture, the growth of urban population in the region has been compared with that in the state.

Locational patterns of towns have been analysed in the fourth chapter. Some excellent sites and locations in the region have been identified, and the relation between locational patterns on one hand and growth and distributional aspects on the other hand has been traced.

Chapter five brings out the salient features of the spatial distribution of urbanism in the region. For this purpose the technique of index of urbanization developed by Dr. A. B. Mukherjee has been adapted.

The sixth chapter is essentially concerned with the centrographic analysis, that is, the application of the statistical concept of 'the central tendency' to the areal distribution of urban centres and urban population of the region.

The seventh chapter comprises the analysis of migrational streams, and particularly evaluates their role in spatial patterns of urban growth in the region.

The eighth chapter focusses upon the economic structure, and degree of economic specialisation therein, of the towns. Changes in economic structure of towns over the last decade have also been investigated.
The conclusion not only sums up the significant finding in the chapters but also suggests lines of future development.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Geographical literature is replete with stereotyped studies of individual towns and cities, analysing over and over again their internal patterns, mostly internal structure, morphology, land-use, umland, etc. in the context of local conditions of site and environs. Only recently have the urban geographers adopted a more panoramic and holistic approach to the urban situation of a region. This approach, regards a town as one entity, and the whole array of towns of a region as a set or system of such entities, and focuses upon the external relations of towns and their role in the organisation and functioning of the regional urban system. This approach has been adopted in the present work. All the towns of the Narmada Valley have been viewed as forming an interrelated system.

In geography, as in many other social sciences and humanities, the last two decades or more have been marked by an increasing reliance on modern statistical methods. These are expected to add to the objectivity and rigour of analysis. Computers or electronic calculators are a big help in this. Nonetheless, the ingenuity
of personal interpretations and deductions of old qualitative theorists cannot, and should not, be overlooked. After all, it is in these interpretations that the intellectual contents of research are to be found. The modern standard statistical methods have been employed for analysis and investigation in the present work without sacrificing the good points of the earlier qualitative work. Sometimes, either a new method had to be adopted or an old one was adapted, depending on the purpose. Except where there were obvious gaps and groupings, the categorisation was on the basis of values of the mean and the standard deviation, and nature and degree of relationship between different elements was established by correlation-regression analysis.

In sum, workable balance has been maintained between theoretical interpretation and statistical objectivity, keeping in view the importance of the topic under investigation and nature of the data available. At the same time, cartographic methods are extensively employed to present a visually appealing, spatial view of urbanization in the region, in consonance with the essentially geographic presentation.