

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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The study begins by raising the question whether urban housing pattern and neighbourhood relationships in India, or for that matter in other developing societies, has common elements with that of Western metropolises or has its own unique modality. It has been argued that while urbanization in India has many resemblances to that of the West, it also differs from the latter in important aspects. Likewise, it has been noted that though Indian cities have large size, high density and heterogeneous population, these characteristics accordance with description of cities by classical urban sociologists (Louis Wirth) which essentially give rise to a distinct urban way of life, it has been noted that such characteristics alone does not produce basic changes in interpersonal relations and housing pattern as in the West.

Against this backdrop the study of urban housing pattern and neighbourhood relationships might offer a useful and significant clue about 'urbanism' in India and might provide legitimate empirical evidences in support of certain objectives pertinent to housing pattern and neighbourhood relationships. It has been envisaged that an empirical inquiry into the urban housing pattern and the nature and degree of neighbourhood relationships would significantly unravel the true nature of urbanism. Since the purpose of this study is to relate housing and neighbourhood relationships with a number of variables determinative of neighbourhood relations, the research design permits the availability of a sufficiently large number of respondents for the purpose of analysis. In all, 400 respondents have been interviewed forming about 4.8 per cent of the total households of the middle class residential areas like Ram Nagar, Gandhipuram, Tatabad/Sivanandha Colony, Sai Baba Colony (K.K.Pudur/ Bharathi Park) and R.S. Puram in the city of Coimbatore, the third largest city in Tamil Nadu after Chennai and Madurai. While purposive sampling was resorted to in the selection of the neighbourhoods, the sample of households was drawn up through random sampling.

In the present study respondents are wide spread in all age groups ranging between 25 years and 72 years and the mean age of the respondents is 42.51. More than half of them are males and almost all respondents are married. Majority of them are Hindus and over half of them belong to Backward community. A greater proportion of respondents have Tamil as their mother tongue and nearly two thirds are graduates with atleast fifteen years of education. Considerable proportions are Administrative Officials, clerks and businessmen. About one half have monthly family income ranging between Rs.5000 to Rs.10,000 and the mean family income is Rs.9807.50 per month. Nearly three fifths live in nuclear families and the average family size is 3.84. Above half of the respondents have children below 18 years while two fifths have children above 18 years. Six out of ten respondents live in own houses and a similar proportion are migrants to the city. More than two third of the respondents dwell in the same place for less than 20 years. A little over one half have some form of savings whereas one fourth are debted.

Correlation is used to find out the relationship between background characteristics and housing and neighbourhood relationships in this study. The correlation-matrix presented in table 8.1. reinforces the findings. It could be seen that sex, marital status, mother tongue, income, availability of children, size of the family, number of rooms and type of house is correlated with satisfaction of housing and other infrastructural facilities. This indicates that female respondents, those who are married, those other than Tamil speaking respondents and those having children below 18 years are not satisfied with housing and other infrastructural facilities. Respondents with higher family income, those having children above 18 years, those with smaller family size, those having more number of rooms in the house and those live in terraced houses are satisfied with housing and other infrastructural facilities.

It could also be seen from the table 8.1., that sex, religion, years of schooling, occupational status, size of the family, number of rooms and migratory status are significantly associated with neighbourhood perception in terms of responsibility, quality

and safety. This indicates that female respondents, those belonging to other religion apart from Hindus, those with larger family size and migrants have lower level of neighbourhood perception. Zimmer (1955-56) stated that natives participate more both formally and informally in the neighbourhood than in-migrants which enhance the perception about the neighbourhood environment. The present study findings are also consistent and reveal that in-migrants have lower level of neighbourhood perception. Respondents with higher level of education, Professional and Administrative Officials and those having more number of rooms in the house have higher level of neighbourhood perception in terms of responsibility, quality and safety.

With regard to neighbourhood relationships (neighbourliness), sex, caste, income, number of rooms and length of residence are significantly correlated with neighbourhood relationships. It depicts that females, those belonging to forward community (FC) and those respondents in higher income group have lower level of neighbourliness and the findings support Bell's (1965) study that indicates higher the economic status of an individual greater would be the formal participation and lesser would be informal participation (i.e., neighbourliness). While those respondents having more number of rooms in the house and those residing in the same residence for more number of years have higher level of neighbourliness falling in line with Bell's (1965) study results that greater the length of stay in one particular neighbourhood higher would be the degree of neighbourliness. Findings reported by Dotson (1951) and Gulick, Bowerman and Back (1962) indicate that individuals with higher educational status tend to participate more in voluntary organizations as well as in informal groupings which enhance the neighbourhood relationships. But in the present study neighbourhood relationship (neighbourliness) is independent of education and other related variables.

Table No. 8.1. Correlation between housing satisfaction, neighbourhood perception and neighbourhood relationships by background characteristics

Background Characteristics	Correlation Coefficient (r)		
	Housing Satisfaction	Neighbourhood perception	Neighbourhood relationships
Age	0.0459	-0.0547	-0.0523
Sex	-0.2132*	-0.2093*	-0.1751*
Marital Status	-0.1587*	-0.0998	-0.0967
Mother tongue	-0.1384*	-0.0254	0.0618
Religion	-0.0401	-0.0569	0.0118
Caste	0.0417	0.0058	-0.1341*
Education	0.0817	0.1493*	0.0518
Occupation	0.0273	0.1519*	-0.0172
Income	0.2593*	-0.0625	-0.1689*
Children above 18 years	0.1218*	-0.0120	-0.0474
Children below 18 years	-0.1178*	-0.0763	0.0127
Family Size	0.1193*	-0.1132*	-0.1064
Type of Family	-0.0200	-0.0344	0.0235
Nature of house	0.0576	0.0706	0.0958
Number of rooms	0.2670*	0.1165*	0.1141*
Type of house	0.1889*	0.0328	0.0455
Migratory status	-0.0307	-0.2169*	-0.0914
Length of residence	-0.0285	0.0541	0.2103*
Settling in Coimbatore	-0.0458	-0.0578	-0.0625

* Value of r at 0.11 and above are significant at 5 per cent level of significance

The overall assessment of housing and neighbourhood relationships and its co-associates provides an integrated picture of urbanism. But when viewed housing and interaction in terms of the constituent neighbourhoods of a metropolitan centre like Coimbatore, a more dynamic and differentiated model of Indian urbanism is identified. Before explicating this dynamic model of Indian urbanism it is necessary to present a summated picture of the independent variables with which the urban housing and interaction (neighbourliness) has been found associated or correlated.

The socio-economic background of respondents, migratory status, length of stay, ownership of a house and plans to settle in Coimbatore have been taken as independent variables while housing and infrastructural facilities, neighbourhood knowledge and perception, neighbourhood preference and neighbourhood interaction are dependent variables in different stages. Although the study did not include any objective on social interaction governed by the traditional collectivities of kin, caste and the region or place of origin of the in-migrants as explicit independent variables, it is evident from the discussion of neighbourhood interaction that they have also been discussed.

The data discussed and analysed in the chapter on housing and infrastructural facilities, neighbourhood knowledge and perception, neighbourhood preference and neighbourhood interaction bring out the association of the above independent variables with urban neighbourhood relationships. The housing and infrastructural facilities depicting housing pattern has been assessed by nature of housing, satisfaction with facilities available in the housing and surrounding environment. The overall analysis of the study indicates that a few background characteristics are associated with nature of house, dwelling preference, and satisfaction with the basic amenities and infrastructural facilities. Similarly a few other variables such as housing preference, plans towards settlement in Coimbatore and length of residence have an influence over nature of house, dwelling preference, satisfaction with basic amenities and infrastructural facilities. Structural variables like age, sex, religion, occupational status, family income, availability of children and type of family are associated with housing satisfaction.

Type of house, number of rooms, dwelling preference, migratory status, length of residence and satisfaction regarding basic amenities and infrastructural facilities influences housing satisfaction. The data of the study indicates that the housing and other infrastructural facilities is significantly associated with a few variables that go to make a person's urban background.

Individual's knowledge and perception towards neighbourhood environment is assessed through various indicators of knowledge such as neighbourhood quality, tendency, facility and problems while perception about neighbourhood is assessed through responsibility, quality and safety. The findings indicate that helping attitude of neighbours is the desirable quality while lack of adjustment is stated to be the most undesirable quality. Apart from these, mutual understanding is the most appreciated tendency, while adjustment with neighbours is considered to be the most favoured support whereas absence of mutual help by neighbours is considered to be a serious problem faced by respondents in the neighbourhood.

Respondents perception about the neighbourhood responsibility indicates that respondents perceive least disturbance in the neighbourhood, have a lot of pride in living in the neighbourhood and feel the neighbourhood is trustworthy and neighbours care respondents houses in their absence and maintain clean environment. With regard to neighbourhood quality, respondents feel that they have access to good quality of drinking water and air, action against flies and mosquitoes is good, have better street light facility and neighbourhood is clean which is followed by other statements. Considering the neighbourhood safety, the respondents in general feel that their neighbourhood is relatively safe but robbery and accidents have higher rate of occurrence compared to other problems.

An examination of respondents preference of neighbours by socio-cultural and socio-economic variables indicates that a greater proportion of respondents prefer to have homogeneous neighbours and neighbourhood. Apart from the preference of immediate

neighbours, a greater importance is also attributed with regard to preference of neighbourhood in a residential area. Neighbourhood preference by homogeneity and heterogeneity depicts that a majority of respondents, irrespective of socio-cultural and economic groups tend to prefer a heterogeneous composition of neighbourhood.

The study depicts that through participation in common activities and membership of formal organizations, there is a certain degree of involvement of respondents in the neighbourhood. The formally organised clubs, religious societies, welfare and recreational associations tend to be more informal in structure and function to a considerable extent. Participation in formal organisations does not seem to affect primary informal ties. Formal participation, like neighbourhood participation within informal framework, may be conceived more additive than substitutive. The neighbourhood ties are strengthened through social calls by friends, relatives, neighbours and others. These social calls are facilitated more by means of dominant relationship, purpose and nature. The data reveals that relatives and friends play a predominant role in the lives of the respondents. Contrary to the traditional stereotypes of urban social interactions, respondents enjoy close and affectional informal ties. They have satisfying relationships with friends, relatives and neighbours due to the nature and content of interaction. Contacts with co-workers are neither very extensive nor intensive yet they are characterised by certain degree of specificity. Neighbouring is an important component of the informal relationships. Neighbourly relations though superficial compared to those with relatives and friends are not purely instrumental but also carry some expressive overtones.

The population of Coimbatore may be divided into the natives, temporary and quasi-migrants and domiciled or permanent in-migrants in the city. It may be postulated that the natives constitute the bottom layers of the city population while the new entrants a marginal and floating group. The latter have to struggle hard to get assimilated into the social and economic system of the city. Some succeed in this struggle and attain the

status of temporary or quasi-migrants while others give up and turn back to their rural habitats. Among the temporary or quasi-inhabitants some in due course get domiciled and become permanent residents of the city. Their progeny joins the ranks of the natives. The new entrants, the temporary and permanent residents are full of elan and dynamism but once they attain the rank of the natives they tend to lose their vigour and buoyancy and along with these also some principal traits of urbanism. The ultimate upshot of this dynamics is that the natives come to resemble the temporary in-migrants in many of their characteristic styles of interaction.

The temporary or quasi-migrant contacts are largely confined to their kinsmen and the people of their village etc. Their interaction is localized in their own neighbourhood and their membership of formal organizations is very limited. The permanent migrants with urban background are on a better ladder in moving up the status level and their urban exposure equips them with a kind of resourcefulness which serves to have relationships in the urban setting. The natives are likely to have comparatively more interaction but again confined to their caste, kin and neighbourhood. The natives on account of their spatial and physical immobility confine to their neighbourhood in terms of interaction.

On the basis of the analysis a dynamic model of urbanism emerges with the following premises: Continuous growth of technology leads to acceleration of industrialisation and with it there is a continuous expansion of job opportunities and occupational mobility. An expansion of job opportunities and occupational mobility increases the length of stay in city which in turn improves the chances of raising one's socio-economic status. An improvement in socio-economic status leads to changes in housing pattern and an increase in social participation (formal and informal). Greater length of stay expands the area of interaction, both spatially and socially. Rise in socio-economic status, however, does not affect the relationships in the urban setting.

The study envisages an ideal situation in which the people in the better socio-economic bracket would exhibit an urbanism somewhat analogous to the Wirthian model. But in Coimbatore, however, the present study indicates that the nature and modality of urbanism is different even in the higher socio-economic bracket. The data revealed the persistence of caste, kinship and other traditional collectivities as viable units of social relationship structure. The uncertainties of economic life in the city and marriage regulations continue to provide functional rationale to the persistence of these traditional collectivities.

Further, it may be emphasized that it does not mean that people in higher socio-economic level will not have intimate social relations. The preponderance of such meaningful relationships has been supported by the study and has been further supported by various studies in Asia, Africa and Latin America and also reflected even in Western societies. It seems that overall low degree of urbanism found in Coimbatore is explainable in terms of low degree of industrialisation, restricted economic opportunities and sick industries which do not provide necessary infrastructure that demands a vast labour force and increase in communal violence which hinder the free flow of commuters.

Thus, urbanisation in Indian cities is not accompanied by the necessary degree of industrialisation which not only attracts in-migrants to the cities but also provides them channels for going up the ladder of social and occupational mobility, attaining an optimum level of urban social relationships and ultimately securing a satisfying adjustment with the city life. Particularly in the case of Coimbatore, the obsolete technology of its traditional industries i.e., textile and machinery, and halting diversification of industries are evidences of low input of modern technology which is not likely to be urbanised, although it may acquire a few traits of urban social relationships and therefore urbanism.

To sum up, the inferences and conclusions drawn in this study may be explained in terms of weak industrialisation and resultant urbanisation processes in the Indian situation. The evidence of less changes in housing pattern and high degree of informal relationship, the persistence of caste, kin, neighbourhood and other traditional collectivities as viable units of informal relationships, are some of the major points that establish the uniqueness of Indian urbanism. They also establish that for a meaningful insight into Indian urbanism, a dynamic model has to be evolved which is free from the ecological determinism.