

## BOOK REVIEW

### URBAN SYSTEM OF A DEVELOPING ECONOMY

by

H. N. Misra

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The present volume, a revised and enlarged version of the D. Phil thesis of the author, focusses attention on the characteristic features of urban centres in the hinterland of Allahabad, a medium size city in the Ganga plain. The book, despite the revision of the original dissertation claimed by the author, carries the mould of a thesis retaining the essential fabric of the original work. The attempt made to see the towns as products of regional economy and culture and as factors in regional economic growth is an improvement on the traditional style of regarding cities as isolated entities, and to that extent Dr. Misra deserves to be complimented. One nonetheless wonders if the approach to this work could not have been modified. As usual, there is an over-emphasis on urban landscape. The long reviews of the earlier work, in almost every chapter, as if they were indispensable, lack freshness. A chapter on the economy of the region, a welcome addition, fails to come up to expectations and slips into customary crop pattern, means of irrigation, minerals, industries and the transport-network indices, all disjointed segments, like elementary exercises in economic geography. 'The genesis of the towns' has rightly taken a historical perspective, though this is not enough of a justification for ignoring the socio-economic imperatives. The demographic structure that, among other things, works out the dependency ratio or the median age of the population tells a lot about the population. The author, it appears, sees no necessity of giving even a cursory look at urban society. The classes, social and economic, the harmony and the discord in the society, the way of life, the traditions, the beliefs and the styles, all form a living part of the socio-economic entity

that a city is. These fascinating aspects have not found a place in the book.

The spatial structure and the centrality and hierarchy, though beaten tracks, are well presented and form the background of the author's recommendations incorporated in planning and development. One is, nonetheless, tempted to ask why the hierarchical concept is restricted only to a dozen settlements. Does hierarchy not reach beyond the urban centres? Is it an exclusive attribute of urban systems only?

The concluding remarks of the author on development and planning centre on a growth-pole strategy, with orders of centres forming the focii. Not forgetting the different sectors of planning (componental elements), the author has advocated the application of the model to the whole country working out the number of cities, and intermediate and small towns for an effective coverage of the country by growth poles and centres.

The references and bibliography are copious and will prove of immense value to any researcher.

The present reviewer, divergence of opinions notwithstanding, considers the volume a good piece of research and a significant contribution to Indian Urban Geography. Finally, it must be remarked that printing could have been better and a well designed jacket would have certainly added to the sales appeal of the book and its attraction on a reader's shelf.

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