

Ideology and Development: Gandhism and Maoism on Deurbanization

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This paper deals with an issue of urban process-deurbanization. The perspective of Asian Pragmatism is discussed with the example of two thinkers from the Third World-Gandi and Mao. Contrary to the traditional idealistic studies of post-industrialized societies, this study suggests the importance of basic needs approach in the study of futurology. Besides, the author suggests that futures studies should take the experience of different cultures into serious consideration.

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Introduction

In the early twentieth century, sociology crossed the Rhine River, the Atlantic Ocean to come to the United States. With the changing international environment, Asia may become a new landing-ground for a new sociology in the future. Asia has a long history of human civilization with various lively traditions, and its effect on a new sociology would be anticipated.

This paper will examine two leading pragmatic thinkers from two major Asian nations with a focus on their ideas and pragmatism regarding deurbanization. While urbanization was occurring in other nations around the world, most Third World countries suffered from over-urbanization. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and Mao Tse-tung (1893-1976) developed unique ideas about deurbanization and their thoughts and actions are still alive today in Asia and around the world (Pye, 1984; Savita, 1970).

American pragmatism is based on the philosophy of businessmen (Ruggiero, 1921:252), while Third World pragmatism, like Gandhism and Maoism, are philosophies of the poor. Perspectives about the Third World are based on the village and not the city; on peasants -not businessmen; on the poor-not the rich.

Gandhi and Mao were both pragmatists with a strong sense of revolution. Their ideas on urbanization and basic human needs were partly a reaction to the impact of western nations on their people. Their central concern was to build a better society to meet the basic needs of their people in the immediate future.

They were intellectuals, but knowledge for them was an instrument. They used this instrument to direct change for the social welfare of their people. Their ideas were directed toward action rather than knowledge. Their emphasis was on Third World experiences in general, and their own experiences in particular. This emphasis on the Third World helped to determine which principles from western cultures would be adopted. Mao examined western theorists such as Marx and Lennin and revised their theories to fit the local revolutionary situations in China.

According to the perspective from Sociology of Knowledge, ideas arise within a social context and not just from the talents of a gifted individual. Different forms of pragmatism develop, in part, from the effect different social structures have on the thoughts of individuals. Settlement patterns and work activities may be two of the most important things that influence daily life. The places people live and the tasks they perform as work activity account for many of the differences in the way people think. That helps to explain why different thoughts on urbanization and development come out of the United States, China and India. More than two-thirds of the total population of China and India live in rural areas. On the other hand, two-thirds of the total population of the United States live in urban areas. Both China and India have over 70 percent of their total population engaged in agriculture, while the majority of the American workforce is employed in industrial activities or service related jobs, with less than 5 percent of the population in agriculture. These differences in types of daily tasks performed, contribute to differences in the way people view the world.

Gandhi nor Mao made any specific study of urbanization. They probably never even used the term. However, by examining their views closely we can see they had definite ideas about the relationship between urbanization and development. Essentially, both believed urbanization contributed minimally to national development and did nothing to meet the basic needs of people. Gandhi often said, "India loves not in a handful of her big cities but in 700,000 villages." He often used the phrase "surround the cities from the countryside."

Gandhism

To Gandhi it was clear that India had to forge her own path towards development and not follow the ways of western cultures. Indian had to become self-reliant. "...Western civilization is urban. Small countries like England or Italy can afford to urbanize their systems (Fischer ed., 1962:289)." But this was not true for a country the size of India with large populations and ancient rural traditions.

To Gandhi, India was not a composition of big cities like Calcutta and Bombay, but a country of seven hundred thousand villages. Growth and development would depend on villages rather than cities. He saw the rise of big cities as "a matter of sorrow rather than congratulations (Fischer ed., 1962:118)." India became impoverished when her "cities became foreign markets and began to drain the villages dry by dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands...if the village perishes India will perish too (Fischer ed., 1962:291)." The very foundation of India was her villages. This is where reconstruction would take place if national goals to fulfill basic needs were to be met.

Gandhi understood the priority of basic human needs. He knew that an immediate goal of the people was ending hunger. Democracy could come later. The right to vote would quickly be sold for food to survive one more day. Gandhi believed that "for them, liberty, God, and all such words were merely letters put together without the slightest meaning (Fischer ed., 1962:221)."

Gandhi had experienced unemployment when he returned from England. This experience taught him how important it was "to provide people with work which they can easily do in their desolate homes and which would give them at least the barest living (Fischer, ed., 1962:221-222)." After becoming self-sufficient, they would be in a better position to talk about things like freedom, the congress party, national independence, etc.

What India needed was not mass production, but production by the masses (Schumacher, 1979:203). Everybody would have to work to fulfill their own basic needs. Everyone's education would include learning skills for production. Each village would be self-sufficient with full employment. There would be no need for outside sources (like western nations) to survive. Major production activities would decentralize and move to villages, away from the cities. Such decentralization would also disperse power from the elites in cities to the peasants in villages.

In short, Gandhi's blueprint for reconstruction of India centered around the village. The village provided food, work, religious and

political training, and education. Schumacher often said Gandhi was not only a great religious and political leader but also a great developmental economist (Schumacher, 1979:203).

Gandhism is characterized by a religious and non-violent approach to change (Savite, 1970:2). India's culture emphasizes religion, which is not simply the concern of philosophers and thinkers, but the ordinary people as well. The religion of non-violence is not a belief for the saints or the well educated, but for all people. Gandism was accepted by the people of India over western materialism or colonialism, because Gandhi was wise enough to utilize the values and belief systems of his people. Gandhism believes in moral over material values; cooperation over conflict. Unlike the beliefs of many Third World Marxists or Maoists, it teaches that social reform or revolution should use a nonviolent approach. Gandhi believed society should be based on cooperation rather than domination. Most exploitation, at least in part, depends on the cooperation of the exploited party. To solve the problem of domination or exploitation you should use non-cooperation and non-violence. In a letter to the Viceroy, inaugurating the non-cooperation movement, he said, "...half of India is too weak to offer violent resistance and the other half is unwilling to do so" (Duncan, p.122). This non-violent approach was successfully used against colonialism and helped in India's struggle to gain national independence.

The influence of Gandhi's ideas went beyond India. One of his admirers was Albert Einstein, who saw nonviolence as an antidote to the massive violence of the atomic bomb. Gandhi's idea of village reconstruction had its echo in China. Liang Soo-Ming, a professor at Peking University, was known as a leading scholar in the approach of village reconstruction during the 1930s. However, Professor Liang had far less influence on China than Mao Tse-tung.

Maoism or Mao Tse-tung Thoughts¹

Mao Tse-tung (Mao Ze-Dong) lived from 1893-1976 and was the son of a poor peasant from the village of Shao-Shan, Hunan Province. He was a founder of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and was a major revolutionary thinker. "Mao Tse-tung thoughts" were first presented on May 14, 1945, at a conference of the CCP. They quickly spread from the CCP to all of China and eventually spread worldwide. His influence reached many Third World nations.

The thoughts of Mao and Gandhi have several similarities (e.g. self-reliance, rural over urban), however, Gandhi believed in non-violence and non-cooperation whereas Mao believed in struggle and warfare. Mao believed the essential needs for social progress in China depended on revolution and not piecemeal social reform. He viewed revolution as violent warfare. "Whoever wants to seize and retain state power must have a strong army."

He believed the villages would mobilize to lead the cities in revolution. He realized that 80 percent of the Chinese people were peasants. The success of China's Communists would depend on peasant support. As Pye (1984:208) said, "In Maoist thinking a rural setting encourages the growth of proper revolutionary sentiments, while urban life favors the revival of capitalist attitudes." We could say that Maoism tends to be anti-urban.

After the civil war, a major reconstruction program of China's, regional balance, was begun. This program required the movement of coastal industries and populations to interior locations. The purpose of this plan was to achieve a balance of resources in all regions of China. Most industries, services, and wealth were currently concentrated in the coastal areas. The prosperity of the coastal region was partially due to the disproportionate concentration of foreign investment and trade. This was similar to the experiences of Latin America. Great efforts to reduce the effects of colonization on China

¹Note: Western scholars prefer the term Maoism to "Mao Tse-tung thoughts." The latter is most commonly used in Chinese Society.

were made by the central administration established by Mao. The success of the regional balance policy is reflected in the fact that big cities in mainland China have not grown much since 1949 (Hu, 1985; Chen and Xu, 1985; Sit, 1985; Ginsburg, 1986).

China may be one of the few nations in the world able to relocate people according government planning. Sending urban educated youths to the countryside to work on the farms by administrative force (e.g., using food rationing and household registrations for tracking purposed) was a unique way to deurbanize. This may have been a "manifestation of the Maoist idealization of rural values and distrust of the urban way of life" (Pye, 1984:208).

Mao hoped that the influence of China's experience would someday become worldwide. Guerilla warfare and deurbanization were only two of his ideas used by other Third World nations in their struggles for survival. In Vietnam, Mao's "People's War" was influenced by the Vietnamese General Von Nguyen Giap, a Maoist and a leader in the resistance of the French and Japanese. In Latin America, Che Guevara was a leader of guerrilla warfare in the early 1960s and was influenced by Maoism. After the civil war, the socialist republic of Vietnam transformed and redistributed urban populations (Tap, 1980). Cambodian Maoist, the Pol Pot, forced 3 million Kampuchea metropolitan residents out of the capital city into rural areas during the spring of 1975 using military force. This approach to deurbanization was even more radical than Mao envisioned.

Conclusion

Deurbanization challenges the tradition of western sociology that believes ideology has no affect on urbanization. In the Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century (1899), Weber saw the history of failure. Materialists like Gibbs and Martin (1962) rejected the importance of value orientations in trying to understand urbanization, and imply that positive or negative attitudes about urbanization would have little influence on the process itself. Recent history of urbanization in China, India, Vietnam, and Cambodia shows that ideology

does affect the path of urbanization.

Deurbanization is a concrete, macro spatial strategy of Asian pragmatists. Gandhi and Mao, believed survival was the most basic need of the people, and self-sufficiency was the best way to meet this need. The direction of spatial reorganization must take this priority into consideration. Deurbanization was a concrete reflection of their pragmatism. It would decrease the problems of overurbanization, reduce the tensions between urban and rural populations, and increase the fulfillment of basic needs.

Asian thinkers like Gandhi and Mao have many ideas to share with sociologists. Deurbanization is only one of them. Students of a new sociology must open their minds to learn from real people in real situations.

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