

10th – Work Life and Leisure I



In 1880, Durgacharan Ray wrote a novel *Debganer Martye Agaman* (The Gods Visit Earth) in which Brahma with other Gods came to Calcutta. Seeing the modern city, they were so impressed that they decided to build a Museum and High Court in Heaven. Calcutta was known as the place of opportunities for trade and commerce, education and jobs in 19th century. On the other side, the city had its own problems also such as - poverty, poor quality of housing, confusion related with religion, casteism and gender identity. Like Durgacharan Ray, many other authors observed the contrasting images and experiences of city, viz., wealth and poverty, splendour and dirt, opportunities and disappointment etc. The modern city worldwide has developed only over the last 200 years. Three historical process which have shaped modern cities are:

1. The rise of industrial capitalism
2. The establishment of colonial rule over large parts of world.
3. The development of democratic ideals.

The present chapter deals with the work, life and leisure of two important cities i.e., London and Bombay.

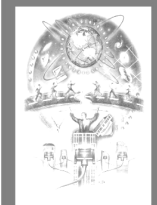
Characteristics of The City: Ancient cities could develop only when an increase in food supplies made it possible to support a wide range of non-food producers. Towns and cities first appeared in river valleys, e.g. Ur, Nippur and Mohenjodaro. Cities were often the centres of political power, administrative networks, trade and industry, religious institutions and intellectual activity. They supported various social groups such as artisans, merchants and priests. Cities can vary greatly in size and complexity. They can be **metropolises** which have political and economic functions for an entire region i.e. for a large population or they may be smaller urban centres with limited functions.

Industrialisation and the Rise of the Modern City in England: In modern age, the form of urbanisation has changed due to industrialisation. Most Western countries were largely rural even many decades after the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The early industrial cities of Britain were **Leeds** and **Manchester**. They attracted large number of migrants to the textile mills, set up in the late 18th century. In 1851, more than three quarters of the adults living in Manchester were migrants from rural areas.

Industrial Expansion in London: Over the 19th century in England, London continued to expand. The population of London was about 675000 in 1750. It multiplied four-fold from 1 million in 1810 to 4 million in 1880. According to historian Gareth Stedman Jones, “19th century London was a city of clerks and shopkeepers, of small masters and skilled artisans, of a growing number of semi skilled and sweated outworkers, of soldiers and servants, of casual labourers, street sellers and beggars”. Five major types of industries in London employed a large number of people. These industries were clothing and footwear, wood and furniture, metals and engineering, printing and stationery and precision products such as surgical instruments, watches and objects of precious metal. During the First World War (1914-18), London began manufacturing motor cars and electrical goods and the number of large factories increased in London. This attracted a large number of people to settle there.

Marginal Groups: During the 19th century, as the city of London grew, crime became an object of widespread concern. The police were worried about law and order, **philanthropists** were anxious about public morality and industrialists wanted a hard-working and orderly labour force. So, the criminals were counted and their ways of life were investigated thoroughly. In the mid-19th century, Henry Mayhew wrote several volumes on the London labour and compiled long lists of those who made a





living from crimes. Many of the so-called criminals were actually poor people who lived by stealing petty items. Other experts at their jobs were the cheats and tricksters, pickpockets and thieves. In an attempt to discipline the population, the authorities imposed high penalties for crime and offered work to those who were considered the 'deserving poor'.

Condition of Women: Women in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in Britain were employed in large number in the factories as they were available at cheaper rates than men. With technological developments, women lost their industrial jobs gradually and were forced to work within households. According to Census 1861, there were a quarter of a million domestic servants in London, of whom the vast majority were women. A larger number of women were engaged in tailoring, washing, making matchboxes etc. In 20th century, there was change once again. At that time, women got employment in war time industries and offices.

Condition of Children: In the book *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, Andrew Mearns wrote about why crime was more profitable than labouring in small low-paid factories. Larger number of children were pushed into low-paid work even by their own parents. Only after the passing of two acts, viz., Compulsory Elementary Education Act (1870) and the Factory Act (1902), the condition of children was changed and they were kept out of industrial work.

Housing in London: After the Industrial Revolution, a large number of people began to migrate to London. But the factory or workshop owners did not accommodate the migrant workers. Individual landowners put up cheap and unhealthy tenements for the workers. In 1887, a survey conducted by Charles Booth revealed that 1 million Londoners were very poor and were expected to live only upto an average age of 29 (compared to the average life expectancy of 55 among the gentry and the middle class). The condition of the slums was very unhealthy. Thus, Booth concluded that London needed the rebuilding of at least 400000 rooms to house its poorest citizens. Gradually, a large number of people began to recognise the need for housing for the poor. The one-room houses occupied by the poor were a serious threat to public health as they were overcrowded, badly ventilated and lacked sanitation. Poor housing system could create fire hazards, which could engulf other areas in the fire disaster. Over the 19th century, the elites became increasingly worried about drunkenness. Gradually, a **Temperance Movement** developed to fight the evils of drinking.

Upcoming of Mass Housing Schemes: After the Russian Revolution of 1917, there was a widespread fear of social disorder. Poor section of society could revolt against the social disparity. Thus, worker's Mass Housing Schemes were accepted by the British Government. A million of houses, mostly single-family cottages were built by the local British authorities.

Cleaning London: The congestion in the 19th century city led to need for clean air. Consequently, a variety of steps were taken to Clean up London. Localities were decongested, open space Greened, pollution reduced and landscape of the city improved. Large blocks of apartments were built like those in Berlin and New York which had similar housing problems. Rent control was introduced in Britain to solve severe housing shortage.

Principle of Garden City: Some attempts were made to bridge the difference between city and countryside through ideas such as the **Green Belt** around London. Architect and planner Ebenezer Howard developed the principle of the Garden City. It was a pleasant space full of plants and trees, where people would both live and work and it



produce better-quality citizens. Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker designed the Garden City Of New Earswick. But only well-off workers could afford these houses.

Transport in the City: Between the two World Wars (1919-39), the British authority took the responsibility to make houses for the working classes. 1 million houses mostly single-family cottage was built. The city extended beyond the range which further necessitated new forms of mass transport. The London underground railway partially solved the housing problem by carrying large number of people to and from the city. The first underground railway in the world opened on 10th January, 1863 between Paddington and Farrington Street in London. By 1880, the expanded train service was carrying 40 million passengers a year. In the initial stage, people were afraid to travel by this underground railways. Some thought, these were a menace to health due to **asphyxiation** and heat. Many felt that these 'iron monsters' added to the mess and unhealthiness of the city.

Displacement Due to Railways: Charles Dickens, in his novel *Dombey and Son* (1848) wrote about the massive destruction in the process of construction of underground railways. To make this railway, 900 houses had to be destroyed. Thus, the London tube railway led to a massive displacement of the poor people of London between the two World Wars. The underground railway became a huge success. As a result, the population in the city became more dispersed. Now, the people began to settle in better-planned suburbs and could travel to work.

Social Change in The City: In the 18th century, the family had been a unit of production, consumption and political decision-making in Britain. But with the **urbanisation** and industrialisation, the function and shape of the family were completely changed. Ties between members of households loosened. The institution of marriage among working class tended to breakdown. Women of upper and middle class families faced increasing levels of isolation. Their lives became comfortable and easier by the help of the domestic maids who did cooking, cleaning, caring for young children on low wages. Women, who worked for wages had some control over their lives. Many social reformers thought, family as an institution had broken down. It could only be saved by pushing the working women back into home.

Men, Women and Family in the City: City life encouraged greater **Individualism** among both men and women and a freedom from the collective values of smaller rural communities. Public space became increasingly male preserve and the domestic sphere was seen as the proper place for women. Women lost their industrial jobs and were forced to withdraw into their homes. Political movements like chartism which demanded the vote for all adult males and the 10-hour movement which demanded limited hours of work in factories only mobilised large numbers of men. From the 1870s, women participated in political movements which demanded the right to vote for women and the right to property for married women. By the 20th century, the urban family life had been transformed again. Women, were employed in large number to meet war demands. The family now consisted of much smaller units. The family became the heart of a new market of goods and services and of ideas.

