

Bhaskar Gautam and Jagannath Adhikari. 2006. *Saharīkaraṇ: Jīvikāko Bibidh Āyām*. Kathmandu: Martin Chautari.

From its hoary past to the present day, Kathmandu's madness and beauty have been responsible for the large number of migrants from various corners of the country to move into the city. Historically, the formation of market towns and cities depended on geographical factors and how well these facilitated trading routes. Kathmandu has been fortunate with regards to these spatial characteristics, and this is why settlements propped up in and around the Kathmandu early on. It was during the reign of the Lichchavi dynasty in particular that Kathmandu became a major

trade hub between Tibet, India, China and Central Asia (see Bista 1991; Stiller 1995).

As the country's Capital, Kathmandu—compared to other parts of Nepal—is dense in population as it is in 'modern' infrastructures, features that testify to the rapidity of urbanization in the region. Much can be attributed to the development model that was adopted in the country after 1950, which strengthened the rural-urban divide, and distinguished the Capital as a place of opportunity and better futures, thereby inducing mobility among people from rural areas towards the city. Improved facilities in education, health, business, as well as other sectors, coupled with an exciting pace of life, have long made Kathmandu a glittering ideal of sorts for all country dwellers who dream of leaving their sluggish existences behind and coming here. But, of course, all that glitters is not gold. Kathmandu might boast more facilities than any other city in Nepal, but it also suffers from its own set of unique problems. The ballooning prices of basic goods, high levels of unemployment, complex poverty and inequality, lack of sanitation, scarcity of drinking water, difficult-to-navigate roads, chaotic traffic conditions, frequent road accidents, pollution, and skyrocketing crime rates are just a few among these. These are the sorts of issues that consistently threaten the integrity of life in Kathmandu, and are included among the bitter facts that residents have come to graspingly accept about their city.

The intricacies of the social and cultural challenges faced by urban dwellers in a day-to-day capacity have usually been overlooked in both contemporary discourses and academic write-ups. It is in this context that the book *Saharīkaraṇ: Jivikāko Bibidh Āyām* (Urbanization: Various Facets of Livelihood) represents an attempt to kick-start debates on the issue of urbanization and livelihood, an appreciable foray into the numerous vantage points from which to look at Kathmandu. Copies of the book, had gone out of print since 2009 and has been reprinted recently. *Saharīkaraṇ: Jivikāko Bibidh Āyām* is an edited volume of 13 articles, preceded by an exceedingly resonant introduction by co-editors Bhasker Gautam and Jagannath Adhikari. Stressing the shortage of knowledge and research on the contemporary urban issues of Nepal, the introductory chapter highlights the negligence of the urban space by over emphasizing the backdrop of rural development strategy. This is highly propagated both by the state and development discourses of the country.

All the articles in the book portray the multifarious aspects of life in the city, focusing on significant issues as structural inconsistencies, among others. In addition to this, contributors depict and argue about the

growing urban poverty and social inequality. Contributing commendably to the debate on urbanization in Nepal, the book highlights in the fundamental problems and short-comings of rapid urban growth—and their impact on the people—raising the alarm on the failure to tackle these through favorable policy regulations.

The articles by Pitambar Sharma (Chapter 1) and Surendra Tiwari (Chapter 2) comprehensively exhibit synchronic and diachronic study of the city, its population and the overall architecture it inherits. Sharma historically delineates the urbanization process in Nepal and suggests urbanity as an indispensable factor for the development of Nepal. Tiwari argues about the impact of physical architecture and structure of the town upon the livelihood of majority of the large number of urban dwellers.

Who are the margins of the city? Masako Tanaka (Chapter 3) and Samita Bhattarai's (Chapter 4) articles have contributed on the urban squatters and disable communities. Tanaka broadly provides the historical overview of the landless squatters, the emergence of the movement, the success it achieved and the direction it headed during different courses of time. Tanaka believes the movement to be one of the leading movements of the country. Similarly Samita Bhattarai provides a dim picture of a struggle of the people living with disability in the city and addresses the exclusion of those communities at different spheres of the society.

Sizu Upadhaya's (Chapter 8) writing on the rise and fall of garment industries in Nepal poignantly demonstrates the dependency of the industry even for the basic raw materials, the situation of the surplus labor and the impact of international pact upon the labor. At the same time Radha Adhikari and Ian Harper (Chapter 9) exclusively inform the growing nursing institutes in town, highly stimulating many literate women interested to opt this profession. Analyzing, the augmentation of the fashionable nursing profession in the urban centers, the authors link this growing profession with the rising international demand.

Street vending activity is one of the very visible parts of the urban landscape. Many people in Kathmandu make their living by selling different wares in the street which has highly contributed in the informal economy of the country. Chiran Manandhar's (Chapter 12) article on the increasing street food culture and Jagannath Adhikari's (Chapter 13) cases of the various street vendors' experiences have highly contributed in the street vendors discourse in Kathmandu. Two of the alarming articles by Jagannath Adhikari (Chapter 10) and Prakash Amatya (Chapter 11) warns on the future scarcity and insecurity of food and water in the town.

The articles in the book provide the visible strains and problems observable in the city. *Saharikaran: Jivikāko Bibidh Āyām* takes the readers on a ride through the various dimensions of livelihoods in Kathmandu with pieces that are scholarly, aptly-textured and meticulously researched. It is a well-informed collection designed to raise the right questions and to offer possible solutions. The book is refreshingly diverse in its selection; some articles are highly theoretical, while others are more empirically-built, based on interesting case studies and narratives. Photographs by Chiran Manandhar and Dipendra Bajracharya incorporated into the text do well to illustrate points made in subtle yet powerful ways. What is most unique about the book is perhaps its emphasis on the importance of revving up the study of urban issues in the country. It points out that the negligence of pertinent discussions and debates on urbanization, and inability on the part of concerned authorities to implement sound plans and policies in this regard, has led to the exacerbation of problems like poverty and crises of livelihood in the city.

The book can attract readers from any discipline and at the same time it is important for urban planners and policymakers. Of course, the book seems to be printed hastily and the second edition lacks a substantive work on the part of editing. The editors of the book also have not dealt strongly with the different concepts, discourses and debates of the urbanization in the section they have penned. Notwithstanding having a varied content the book does contain some field-specific terminology that presumes knowledge on the readers' part, which might be a bit of a hassle for those exploring urbanization for the first time, and it would have certainly been good had these terms been conceptually defined within the text itself or via footnotes. Most importantly the book lacks to incorporate few articles related to the government's urban policy and planning. Without this it becomes inadequate to stress on urban poverty, social marginality, equity and the rights of the poor urban dwellers. There is no single article in the book related to the different levels of environmental pollution rapidly growing in the city.

Never the less, *Saharikaran: Jivikāko Bibidh Āyām* certainly opens a new dimension in urban studies with its diverse content and vastly informative pieces. Readers can highly enjoy the variety of articles incorporated in the book. This book has opened up a new dimension by pursuing a study on space, urbanization, city, livelihood, urban poverty and informal economy.

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