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BOOK REVIEW :

SOCIAL FORMATION IN DHAKA CITY

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According to the "Melting Pot Theory" given by the Social Anthropologists all races, cultures, castes and creeds are supposed to be melted into oneness and transformed into a homogeneous mass. After going through the recently published book "Social Formation in Dhaka City", we however, come to a conclusion that the same effect is not approaching constantly in case of Dhaka city. Rather, various earlier classifications here have suffered continuous changes and thus have taken up new shapes with distinctively new features and characters.

From the very title of the book one may get the idea that the book presents' an analytical study of the social formation of Dhaka city. One may however, be disappointed to find that instead of analytical study in to the subject, the book presents the related social, spatial, cultural, religious, behavioral and some physical informations in facts and figures. The book will thus serve the purpose of excellent source of information or 'data bank' essential for the Social Planners and Policy makers for their various projects, policy planning and formulations.

By all consideration the book is a 'picture' and not 'painting' of the contemporary social scene of Dhaka city. Some of the informations written in this book are available else where and in this context, the book is a mere compilation of related topics. But many informations, specially those pertaining to income, behaviour and attitude of the city dwellers towards various aspects of modern society have been carefully collected, processed and presented.

Any book in such an important subject like social formation must be looked at differently than a mere merchandize and the endeavour, sincerity and honesty in 'creating' this picture must be taken in to consideration. It is extremely difficult to find out the inner thought and aspirations of various sections of people through Questionnaire or interview. Most of the time, the respondents try to conceal the facts. However, after going through the methodology adopted and training program of the interviewer, this critic is convinced that the results are revelations of near-facts, if not absolute facts.

As already mentioned that the book presents a picture of the Social atmosphere of Dhaka, the point of consideration should be how clear and accurate this picture is. The

This monograph is divided into seven well-conceived and intelligently written chapters. After the introductory chapter the authors focus on research design, model specification and estimation and evaluation of estimates in the following four chapters. The fifth and sixth chapters are important as these establish the desirability and applicability of the econometric model.

POTENTIAL FOR SLUM UPGRADING AMONG OWNERS AND RENTERS is a complementary monograph to the first monograph.

This monograph is divided into four chapters-involving stratification of slum dwellers, study of the socio-economic and housing indicators immediately following the usual introductory chapter.

POTENTIAL FOR SLUM UPGRADING AMONG OWNERS AND RENTERS shows that the stratification between owners and tenants is distinct and significant and has an effect on differential housing consumption in the city. The study shows that the owners have been paying increased attention to housing expenditures, renters or tenants have limited potential to pay for improved housing environment. Thus the authors argue that while cost recovery in slum upgrading may rely more heavily on house-owners but the renters can too share the cost to some extent through successive increase in monthly rental payments.

The authors tried to throw some light on this crucial aspect by pointing to the investment capability of slum dwellers (i.e., owners and tenants) for improvement of their housing conditions. The owners and tenants were all found to be very willing and able to pay for the expenditures of improvement; whereby, the tenants would contribute by way of increased monthly rental payment and owners through property tax. Here the authors seem to have failed to notice that the property tax, payable by the owners, too would be extracted from the tenants through another step of increase in rental payments. This means that tenants will have to pay doubly through increased rents for improvements and also indirectly the property tax meant to be paid by the owner. Thus the owner of the dwelling in no way will bear cost of improvement!

Therefore if cost recovery is the salient point in upgrading projects, then it implies heavy reliance, indirectly, rather on the tenants or renters of slum dwelling, than on the owners.

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