Literature and the Smart City Concept

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ABSTRACT

The concept of smart city may vary from person to person, but it is a truth altogether that in the formation of smart city every comprised unit should be made so competent that it must contribute to it accordingly. To have an honor of being called a smart city a city must fulfill certain criteria of different aspects. In the case of India this principle gets a bit difficult. Since, India has a very rich heritage; the responsibility of its citizens becomes intense to preserve its culture, traditions and customs with the modern outlook. The whole intelligentsia will have to unite to comprehend how literacy and literature altogether contribute in the preservation of culture and traditional treasure. Every individual should be aware of not only his rights but also his duties and he must also know that he too is responsible for the mass development. Present paper is an attempt to signify the unique identity of India which lies in its diverse customs and how literature may be helpful in making humans aware of the relevant characteristics of every age. There may be a contradiction because an uneducated person may also be civilized but there can be no argument against the fact that a literary person is aware of his surroundings and thus he may be more responsible stakeholder for the smart city environment.

INTRODUCTION

As we see there is no universally accepted term used for smart city. Technically, a city can be called smart when investments in human and social capital and traditional (transport) and modern (ICT) communication infrastructure fuel sustainable economic development and a high quality of life, with a wise management of natural resources, through participatory action.   Caragliu Njkamp 2009

Human beings are social and literature reflects society and its influence can be observed directly or indirectly on society. But it is also a truth that the concept of smart city may vary to different people from city to city and even country to country, it also depends to a great extent on the level of development, resources and reforms. Smart cities focus on their most pressing needs and on the greatest opportunities to improve lives. There is a large range of approaches such as digital and information technologies, urban planning best practices, public private partnerships and policy change to make a difference. But it is very important to put people on the priority. Though, the issue of environmentalism remains the dominant 'alternative model' of urban design. To inculcate new cultures is one of the relevant factors in the process of being a smart city. For the students of literature the concept if smart city automatically shifts their imagination to the ultimate work of Thomas More called" UTOPIA" as human efforts are not ample to make a city ideal. Now, this is the point to contemplate whether the idea of an urban utopia is celebrated because it is a fantasy that we can all appreciate without having to create, endorse or understand? It is now enjoyed precisely because it isn't a reality, but rather way of escaping from the need to confront the challenges involved in actually transcending current limits and changing the world. In fact if we imagine a perfect city it is what we will never get. It is just like the concept of UTOPIA which literally means "no place" .Further Francis Bacon wrote "The New Atlantis" which examined the creation of a utopian land where "generosity and enlightenment, dignity and splendor, piety and public spirit" are the commonly held qualities of the inhabitants of the mythical island of Bensalem.

With the emergence of smart cities, the importance of literacy is being realized. The holy grail of smart cities is an integrated, sustainable approach to improve the efficiency of the city's operations and the quality of life of citizens. At the heart of this vision in the citizens who is the primary beneficiary of smart city initiatives, directly or indirectly. With the

evolution of society new concepts are emerging constantly, but are also very true that humans have preserved their cultures, too. As it is well said "Culture is created by us and defines us. It is the embodiment of the distinctive values, traditions and beliefs that make being a country in the 21st century unique- democratic , diverse, adaptive and grounded in one of the world's oldest living civilization" (Creative Australia :Australian Government, ,2013).

Literature and literacy share an intimacy as it is very important to be literate and from reading literature, one learns a great deal about serendipity and human experience in a way that one can't get from a coldly 'scientific' perspective that is about processes. It is extremely helpful when it is connected with collaborating and communicating, and enables one to understand the implications of what one is doing. Literacy in a developing country like India describes the growth of humans throughout the lifespan and scientifically studies human development. These studies include all aspects of human growth i.e. physical, emotional, intellectual, social conservation, perpetual and personality development and thus we see the contribution of literacy and literature is vital in the revival of learning as it marks a different standard to comprehend social evolution. As many literary works have led the society to different social reformations. For instance- "Uncle Tom's Cabin" written by Ms. Stowe resulted in a movement against slavery in USA and several writers like Dickens, Galsworthy and G.B. Shaw influenced on imposing and eradicating social evils. Indian writers Sharad Chandra Chatterjee tried to break conservatism as regards women in our society. We can never forget the contribution of Mulk Raj Anand, George Bernard Shaw, Galsworthy, Dickens, and George Eliot who attempted to bring social reforms through their writings. Their works compel us to think if reforms can take place with literary works, why should we underestimate the power of literature in building a smart city.

India has its own cultural history which has its unique identity in the world and it should be remembered that with the emerging concept of smart cities that cultural heritage must not be disappeared. Integral communication is an essential part of Indian culture. Soirees, gossips, mutual co operation and general discussions on various spheres of life were the very characteristics of Indian culture which are now almost removed from the existing scenario in the wake of smart cities. The general interaction is now done formally. Just like the small coffee shop which is known as coffee house culture, the small smart library will serve as a knowledge broker engaged in locating qualified sources of critical knowledge to solve a particular problem. It should be noted down that these services may function effectively only in participatory environment. We should keep in mind when forming a layout of a smart city that the concept should be integrated to its smart people and the most vital aspect of it is the citizens who live and work must be integral to the implementation process too. As cities are both the subjects and objects of creative activity which provide space, an audience and a market for artists and their works, they are the examples of creative activity in their own right.

The sentence "Education makes one civilized or decent" may have contradictions but literature definitely instills refinement and sophistication towards moral and social responsibilities. Considering its relevance, literature should be read with a view to emerge decency, etiquettes and sophistication which are essential to form a city into a smart city. There is no need to prove this fact as why would anyone question against something especially when it is obviously right. Even if there is any question, then the reply is also very obvious. Hardly, there will be one who doesn't think that reading about Anna Karenina, the good folk of Middlemarch and Marcel and his friends expand our imagination and refine our moral and social sensibilities. On the other hand, if we take Ramayana for instance it also inspires to do what we are supposed to do and what is our prime duty. If we analyze literature, it can easily be observed that literature is interpreted as reflecting norms and values, as revealing the ethos of culture, the process of class struggle, and certain types of social "facts". As in the Absurd dramas (modern genre), it is noticed that social environment is associated with disease and mortality risks, independent of individual risk factors. Loneliness has been depicted as the dominant characteristic of modern society. These factors silently constitute to frustration, disappointment, unhappiness and anxiety in human nature whereas in the modern concept of smart city development should be done with mutual effort again the motto of French Revolution, "Equality, Liberty and Fraternity" finds relevance and in this way after deeply analyze literature of several ages we may come to know our drawbacks and try to recover them on intellectual basis.

Here, this is not emphasized that through literature we should try to be the best but we should try to be like them because no one is looking for perfection and idealism but a stint of our culture in our modern concepts is the very essence of Indian spirit and we should try to save it. Literature has the power to move and fill any heart with empathy and thus literary artists tend to bring out the oddities and dark aspects of life overmuch. Reading literature means that we are trying to focus on the seamy, negative and dark sides of society and being conscious citizens of a smart city it becomes our prior responsibility to remove the evils at our level and try to serve the society without being self centered. Literature may thus be helpful in reducing certain amount of stress in lives and raising the standard of humanity high only then the concept of Smart City can be justified.

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