


Changing life-styles

MUHAMMAD RAMZAN looks at how various factions of people are being affected by rapid industrialisation

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Culture

 here is a great difference between standard of living, standard of life and life-style. Many options are open to adapt a certain life-style.

What kind of life-style we should adapt is our personal and individual choice. Usually a child or an adolescent tends to acquire the life-style his parents choose for him. It also depends upon one's age, freedom and independence to exercise one's option. The parent's life-style and standard of living also depend upon their affluence, social status, upbringing, education, social environment and heritage.

Reaching the age of majority, we may decide to get a good job or continue further education, start a lucrative business career or get married to lead a happy life. That is how we prioritise things. After finding a suitable job in another city, our next priority will be finding a suitable house with necessary facilities. As our needs, income levels, trends, working and living environments change, these factors prove instrumental in reshaping our life-style.

However, there are exceptions especially in case of people and races that keep on retaining their originality like gypsies. Giving a brief account of gypsies' life will not be irrelevant to the subject. Gypsies from time immemorial are sticking to their old traditions and ways

of life. Mobility is the essence of their life — rather it is the determining factor of their life-style. They have no land of their own but they consider themselves natives of the land where they live. They are not only found in Pakistan, Asian countries but also in Europe. They are wanderers by birth and are temporary dwellers of one place or another. They do not stay for long at one place. Their life-style can safely be exemplified with migratory birds. Gypsies are a nomadic race.

present day's common facilities of electricity, gas, water, telephone connections, television etc. Some of them do possess transistors and radio sets run by battery. They have an instinct for visiting and exploring new and strange places. Acclimatization is their other major trait. They acknowledge the authority of their tribal chief, who resolves their day-to-day disputes and conflicts. Their common occupations are tinkering, basketry, selling balloon for children

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They are believed to be of Indian origin. Their means of transport is very simple i.e. a donkey driven or mule driven cart. They live in temporary abodes/huts, consisting of bent and bowed branches of trees, covered by second hand cloth and rags. The natural soil of these tented houses serves the purpose of the floor. In summer the inmates very often sleep on second hand used cloth spread over the floor. In winter they usually sleep on string charpoys and cots. They have no access to the

and snake charming, while some of their men are horse dealers and fortune tellers. Their women are also seen labouring at under constructed sites while males lull and look after the children. Evidently, their women are more hardy than their men. Some smart and skilled gypsy girls make handsome earnings while dancing and singing, tuning a brass pot (known as "gadvi bajana") at marriage parties and other functions. With the advent of time, trends of living and life-style are changing.

Young guys living alone prefer to have other singles to share the accommodation in order to share rent and utility bills. Moreover, living alone is monotonous and tiresome. Of course man is a social animal. Living with compatible friends has its own charms. A bit of chatting, cooking, eating and outing together is no doubt a pleasant experience. Thus companionship has its unique benefits.

In rural areas of Pakistan and other agrarian regions people, for economic and social reasons, live in groups. Their houses in villages are mostly *kutchra* or *pucca-kutchra*. They usually work and live together in joint families. There is mutuality, team work and sharing of responsibilities. By helping each other, they enrich their lives. This life-style has its own social, cultural and economic bonds, benefits and blessings. They share their small joys on the birth of their children and village fairs. A good harvest brings unlimited joy to them. They celebrate these occasions with great jubilation, festivity and pomp and show. Girls dressed in colourful clothes sing folk songs on the beat of small drums ("dholak") or earthen pitchers using them as musical instruments. Boys, young men and women perform folk dances like "luddi", "dhumal", "dharees" and "jhumar" to the tune of drumming. Their melodious and harmonious performance keeping pace with the sound and speed of playing on a drum, produces a thrilling effect on the minds of the onlookers and spectators. They appreciate the performers in their own local provocative terminology, arising interest and enthusiasm of the performers like: "Wah bhai Wah", "Ballai bhai Ballai" and "Shawa bhai shawa". Sometimes even cash and currency notes are showered over the performers as monetary rewards. A head of the village or well-to-do host would slaughter a calf or a goat or two to serve the guests with beef or

mutton and rice-beef or rice-mutton cooked by the village cook in "deags" (big cooking pans).

Providing a "hookah" in such gatherings is an essential commodity, without which all the provisions and facilities made available are considered inadequate. A "dera" (a village drawing room of the landlord) is thought to be a deserted place if a "hookah" is not available there.

Now that rapid industrialisation has paved way for speedy urbanisation, the life style of people has changed to a great degree. Elite live in posh areas of big cities and towns like Lahore, Karachi, Hyderabad, Islamabad, Faisalabad and Multan. They have a life-style distinctively different from the common citizens. Bureaucrats, businessmen, feudal lords, political figures and bankers fall in this category. They spend their spare time in clubs, operas and casinos. They hesitate mixing up with commoners and move in their own class of society. Their social activities include arranging or attending cocktails, house-warming and cultural functions. Most of them love to take what is known as "social drink" in their social gatherings. They prefer to live in comfortable spacious, well-furnished and decorated bungalows and plazas. Their kids study in Aitchison and other prominent English medium schools and colleges where standards of education are high and expenses on education are beyond the reach of commonfolks. Their ladies follow the latest in fashion trends be it dress, jewellery or make-up. Accessories are fast becoming indispensable wardrobe items. Dish, cable and internet have altogether changed the pattern of their social behaviour. The youth of our country got to understand the responsibilities on their shoulder and not just while away time in frivolous pursuits. ●