

Urbanization in India: An Impact Assessment

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Abstract Urbanization is closely linked to modernization, industrialization, and the sociological process of rationalization. Urbanization is not merely a modern phenomenon, but a rapid and historic transformation of human social roots on a global scale, whereby predominantly rural culture is being rapidly replaced by predominantly urban culture. Urbanization occurs as individual, commercial, and governmental efforts reduce time and expense in commuting and improve opportunities for jobs, education, housing, and transportation. Many rural inhabitants come to the city for reasons of seeking fortunes and social mobility. But the picture of urbanization is not so much glorious as it apparently seems. Modern cities have grown in a haphazard and unplanned manner due to fast industrialization. Cities in developing countries become over-populated and over-crowded partly as a result of the increase in population over the decades and partly as a result of migration. **Methodology:** This study is descriptive research. The data is gathered through secondary sources like Government Records, books, articles, web-based journals. The Records of Urban Population as sourced from Census Reports have been tabulated for description of its trend. This paper seeks to review the effects of fast growing urbanization in Indian society through analysis of its multi-dimensional impact.

Keywords Urbanization, Push and Pull Factors, Industrialization, Civic amenities, Marginalization

1. Introduction

Urbanization is an index of transformation from traditional rural economies to modern industrial one. It is a progressive concentration of population in urban unit (Davis, 1965). Kingsley Davis has explained urbanization as process of switch from spread-out pattern of human settlements to one of concentration in urban centers (Davis, 1962). It is a finite process-a cycle through which a nation passes as they evolved from agrarian to industrial society (Davis and Golden, 1954). He has mentioned three stages in the process of urbanization. Stage one is the initial stage characterized by rural traditional society with predominance in agriculture and dispersed pattern of settlements. Stage two refers to acceleration stage where basic restructuring of the economy and investments in social overhead capitals including transportation, communication take place. Third stage is known as terminal stage where urban population exceeds 70% or more. At this stage level of urbanization remains more or less same or constant (Davis, 1965). Rate of growth of urban population and total population becomes same at this terminal stage.

2. Definition of Urban Areas

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In Census of India, 2001 towns were classified into two parts:

a) **Statutory towns:** All places with a municipality, corporation, Cantonment board or notified town area committee, etc. so declared by state law.

b) **Census towns:** Places which have a minimum population of 5000 with at least 75% of male working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits and a density of population for at least 400 persons per sq.km.

Urban Agglomeration:- Urban agglomeration is a continuous urban spread constituting a town and its adjoining Urban Outgrowths (OGs) or two or more physical contiguous town together and any adjoining urban outgrowths of such towns. Examples of outgrowths are railway colonies, university campus, port area, military campus that may come up near a statutory town or city. In census of India, 2001 it was decided that the core town or at least one of the constituent towns of an urban agglomeration should necessarily be a statutory town and the total population of all the constituents should not be less than 20,000.

3. Urbanization in India

India shares most characteristic features of urbanization in the developing countries. It is the most significant phenomenon of 20th century which has almost affected all aspects of national life in India. Being the second most populous country in the world after China, India's growing

urbanization has a regional as well as world-wide impact. The number of total population has increased from 23.84 crores in 1901 to 102.7 crores in 2001 whereas number of population residing in urban areas has increased from 2.58 crores in 1901 to 28.53 crore in 2001. India's urban population constitutes a sizeable proportion of world's urban population. This can be well corroborated from the fact that every 12th city dweller of the world and every 7th of the developing countries is from India. The breakout of hostilities with China and Pakistan in 1962 and in 1965 respectively and short recession accompanied by drought during 1967, acted as obstacles to the progress of industrialization. One can, therefore, observe that the process of industrialization though started during the sixties, could not be marked. Urbanization could hardly absorb a little more than the natural increase in urban population. As a result, a serious dent in terms of the shift of population from rural to urban areas could not be made.

Urban population increased from 26 million in 1901 to 62 million in 1951— an increase of only 36 million in 50 years. But the absolute increase during the next three decades was of the order of 94 million during 1951-81. This indicates that programmes of industrialization did make an impact in terms of population absorption in urban areas, though its impact was very discernible. During 1981-91, urban population in

absolute terms reached the figure of 285 million accounting for 27.8 per cent of total population.

Degree of urbanization varies widely among the States of the country. Goa is the most urbanized State in India with 49.77 per cent urban population followed by Mizoram, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. All Union Territories are highly urbanized except Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The Degree of urbanization is high in southern, western and north-eastern states whereas low urbanization level is found in northern and central states. Maximum concentration of the country's urban population is found in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. It is important to mention that urban population of Uttar Pradesh is large accounting for 34.5 million. The rest five states namely Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Union Territory of Delhi together account for 30.7 percent of urban population. Remaining eighteen States and six Union Territories contain only 18.2 per cent of the urban population of India. India is at acceleration stage of the process of urbanization.

According to 2001 census (Table 2), in India out of total population of 1027 million about 285 million live in urban areas and 742 million live in rural areas. Sex ratio, defined as number of female per 1000 male, for urban, rural and total India are 900, 945, 933 respectively.

Table 1. Population of India by Residence (1901-2001)

Census Years	Number of Urban Agglomeration/towns	Total Population	Urban Population	Rural Population
1901	1827	238396327	25851873	212544454
1911	1825	252093390	25941633	226151757
1921	1949	251321213	28086167	223235046
1931	2072	278977238	33455989	245521249
1941	2250	318660580	44153297	274507283
1951	2843	361088090	62443709	298644381
1961	2363	439234771	78936603	360298168
1971	2590	598159652	109113977	489045675
1981	3378	683329097	159462547	523866550
1991	3768	844324222	217177625	627146597
2001	5161	1027015247	285354954	741660293

Source: Census Report, Govt. of India, 1901-2001

Table 2. Rural-Urban Population Sex Ratio

India	Male	Female	Total Person	Sex ratio
Urban	150135894	135219060	285354954	900
Rural	381141184	360519109	741660293	945
Total	531277078	495738169	1027015247	933

Source: Census Report, Govt. of India, 2001

4. Basic Features of Urbanization in India

The pattern of urbanization in India is characterized by continuous concentration of population and activities in large cities. Kingsley Davis used the term "over-urbanization" where in urban misery and rural poverty exists side-by-side (Kingsley Davis and Golden, 1954). Another scholar named Breese depicts urbanization in India as pseudo-urbanization wherein people arrive at cities not due to urban pull but due to rural push factors (Breese, 1969). Rezaan Kundu talked of dysfunctional urbanization and urban accretion which results in a concentration of population in a few large cities without a corresponding increase in their economic base. Urbanization process is not mainly "migration led" but a product of demographic explosion due to natural growth. Besides, rural out-migration is directed towards class I cities (Premi, 1991). The big cities attained inordinately large population size leading to virtual collapse in the urban services and quality of life. Large cities are structurally weak and formal instead of being functional entities because of inadequate economic base. The urban population in India has gone up gradually from about 11 percent in 1901 to 17 percent in 1951 and then to 28 percent in 2001. The urban growth rate during 1941–51 was fairly high at 3.5 per cent per annum, but then reduced to 2.3 per cent in the following decade. It has been pointed out that the figure for the 1940s was on the high side, since the definition of urban centre could not be standardized in the first Census conducted after Independence and also because massive rural–urban migration occurred due to partition of the country. The highest rate of urban growth (3.8 per cent) was recorded during the 1970s, but has subsequently reduced to 3.1 per cent in the 1980s and 2.7 per cent in the 1990s. It has certain unique features which are as follows:-

- Lopsided urbanization induces growth of class-I cities.
- Urbanization occurs without industrialization and strong economic base.
- Urbanization is mainly a product of demographic explosion and poverty induced rural-urban migration.
- Rapid urbanization leads to massive growth of slum followed by misery, poverty, unemployment, exploitation, inequalities, degradation in the quality of urban life.
- Urbanization occurs not due to urban pull but due to rural push factors.
- Poor quality of rural-urban migration leads to poor quality of Urbanization (Bhagat, 1992).
- Distress migration initiates urban decay.

Urban centers in India are characterized by extreme heterogeneity in terms of their socio-economic characteristics. Large cities exhibit distinctly lower poverty ratios. Poverty in million-plus cities dropped to around 14 per cent in 1999–2000, from 18 per cent observed in 1993–94. The medium category cities/towns, with population between 50,000 and 01 million, reported poverty

levels of 20 and 28 per cent at these two points in time. The corresponding percentage figures in small towns of population under 50,000 were as high as 24 and 33, becoming even slightly higher than those in rural areas. There are, thus, reasons to be concerned about the poverty situation in lower categories of urban settlements, as much as in rural areas. The low incidence of poverty in larger cities is due to the expansion of economic opportunities and the availability of semi-skilled employment there. These cities also provide better social and physical infrastructure, including educational facilities, which results in higher productivity.

5. Basic Problems of Urbanization in India

Problem of urbanization is manifestation of lopsided urbanization, faulty urban planning, and urbanization with poor economic base without having functional categories.

➤ India's urbanization is followed by some basic problems in the field of: 1) housing, 2) slums, 3) transport 4) water supply, sanitation, 5) water pollution, air pollution, 6) inadequate provision for social infrastructure (school, hospital, etc). Class I cities such as Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Madras have reached saturation level of employment generating capacity (Kundu, 1997). Since these cities are suffering from urban poverty, unemployment, housing-shortage, crisis in urban infrastructure, these large cities cannot absorb these distressed rural migrants i.e poor landless illiterate and unskilled agricultural labourers.

➤ Most of these cities using capital intensive technologies cannot generate employment for these distressed rural poor. So, there is transfer from rural poverty to urban poverty. Poverty induced migration of illiterate and unskilled labourer occurs in class-I cities addressing urban involution and urban decay.

➤ Indian urbanization is involuted not evolved (Mukherjee, 1995). Poverty induced migration occurs due to rural push factors. Megacities grow in urban population not in urban prosperity, and culture (Nayak, 1962). Hence it is urbanization without urban functional characteristics. These mega cities are subject to extreme filthy slum and very cruel mega city denying shelter, drinking water, electricity, sanitation to the extreme poor and rural migrants (Kundu, Bagchi and Kundu, 1999).

➤ Urbanization is generating social and economic inequalities which warrant social conflicts, crimes and anti-social activities (Kundu and Gupta, 1996). Lopsided and uncontrolled urbanization leads to environmental degradation and degradation in the quality of urban life. Illiterate, low-skilled or unskilled migrants from rural areas are absorbed in poor low-grade urban informal sector at a very low wage-rate and urban informal sector becomes inefficient and unproductive.

6. Effects of Urbanization

With changes in the land-use pattern when the city grows in size, it expands both horizontally and vertically. The horizontal expansion engulfed the nearby fringe villages and converted the agricultural lands, so that there is decrease in water level. So, there are chances of contamination of drinking water because of leakage of pipes. Another thing worth consideration is land value which is appreciated because of scarcity of land in the growing urban centres. Therefore, there is mushrooming growth of apartments and in busy centres, the apartments are given permission without checking the way of sewage facilities. The effects of urbanization may be seen on various lines in the following components:-

➤ Slums and associated problems:-

The acute shortage of housing facilities is one of the most serious problems plaguing the Indian cities, whether it is a metropolitan city or a small town. The reason for this is that the availability and development of housing facility has not expanded fast enough to meet growing demand for rapid urbanization process. The acute shortage of housing facilities compels the poor to live in slums. Slums have developed in almost all the Indian cities. Slums are called by the names of *Bustees* in Calcutta, *Jhuggis* in Delhi, *Chawl* in Mumbai and *Cheri* in Chennai. The slums or Bustees have been defined by the government of India under Slum Area (Improvement and clearance) Act of 1954 as predominantly a residential area, where dwellings by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement and lack of ventilation, light or sanitary facilities or any combination of these factors detrimental to safety, health and morals. It is estimated that 40 per cent of people in mega-cities like Calcutta, Mumbai and Delhi live in slums. These slums have extremely unhygienic conditions. They have impoverished lavatories made by digging a shallow pit in-between three to four huts and with sackcloth "curtain" hanging in front. The children, of course, are used to defecate anywhere around the huts. All such areas have several cesspools and puddles. These are invariably dug in the middle of a state dirty pool. People wash their clothes and utensils under the hand pumps. This causes diseases like blood dysentery, diarrhea, malaria, typhoid, jaundice and conjunctivitis, which stalk them all the year around. Children with bloated bellies or famished skeletons suffer from polio and common sight.

Human development is also adversely affected by the environmental degrading. Access to safe drinking water and separation are closely linked with life expectancy and infant mortality which are very important indicators of Human Development. So, the poor take fertility decisions to compensate for these factors and to avoid risks. Larger population leads to more poverty and worsens the environment creating a vicious circle.

➤ Transport system:-

There are 300 million cars, trucks and buses all over the world. During peak hours, there will be huge traffic jams in

the main junctions. Because of traffic jams more petroleum products are wasted which results in fuel problem. During peak seasons the vehicles are parked and overloaded and there are more chances of occurring accidents. It the State which provides good transport system. The combustion of petroleum products, diesel leads to increase of carbon dioxide which helps in increasing Global Warming, air pollution and noise pollution, besides carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide which is released by automobile. The noise pollution affects both auditory and non-auditory organs. The auditory effects are fatigue and deafness in human beings. The non-auditory effects are interference in speed, communication, annoyance, loss of working efficiency and psycho-physiological disorders. The transportation picture in all Indian cities is critical while Mumbai is still having the best city transport system and Chennai, Ahmedabad and Pune being reasonably well-served by the city buses. One reason why we are in this mess is that, whilst planning city expansion, we are still tender to follow the western concept of commuting time and distance being the determinants of the location of activities. This has resulted in compartmentalized zoning of cities, which necessitates extensive travel. At the same time, the level of incomes and affordability being low, our citizens are unable to pay an economic fare for the use of a public transport system. Therefore, all city bus services sustain such heavy annual losses that they cannot really expand or maintain a fleet adequacy to meet city needs.

➤ Problem of garbage:-

Urban solid waste consists of building materials, plastic containers, hospital wastes, kitchen waste etc. The building materials and household solid wastes are dumped on the public places. The hospital wastes do not have covers while transporting. The stringent smell contaminates the air. The Urban sewage does not have proper let-out facility. As Indian society prospers, it trash mainly hazardous plastics, metals and packing is growing exponentially. In the last decade, garbage was produced at nearly twice the rate of population growth. Only eight out of 3,119 towns and cities in India have full wastewater collection and treatment facilities. A third of India's population has no access to sanitation services. It becomes worse in smaller cities and provincial towns.

➤ Sewerage problems:-

The urban areas in India are plagued with inefficient and insufficient civic amenities. Not a single city in India is fully seweraged. The reason for this is that the unauthorized constructions in and around the city lie outside the purview of the main systems. It has been estimated that only 38 per cent of the urban population have a sewerage system. Mumbai's crumbling sewer network is a century old, put in place by the British planners when city was no more than a series of fishing villages. Today, it breaks down frequently with waste about eight million more people than it was designed for. The sewer lines lead to drains, which take the

sewage – 93 percent of it untreated – directly into the sea, killing virtually all marine life along Mumbai’s coast. Delhi’s Yamuna has turned into a giant sewer, chiefly from raw sewage, 40 per cent of Delhi’s sewage is untreated.

➤ **Water supply:-**

India has reached a stage where no city has water supply round the clock. Intermittent supply results in a vacuum being created in empty water lines which often suck in pollutions through leaking joints. Chennai, Hyderabad, Rajkot and Wadhwan get water from municipal sources for less than half an hour every alternative day. Many small towns have no main water supply and depend on such sources as individual wells, household open wells or even the rivers which have some storage water in pools during summer. Within the city, the drainage system hardly exists and the annual flooding of large areas, even in Delhi, it is now a regular phenomenon in many urban centres. Mumbai is located in a keel-line depression, which also happens to be the main railway artery. With every monsoon showers, it gets flooded choking the communication. The problem is particularly acute in the cities of Indo-Gangetic plain. This is the case with Varanasi and Patna. The situation is worse in the eastern part of Patna, which remains water logged throughout the monsoon period. The terminal case is that of Katihar (Bihar) where, because of the peculiar bowl-like configuration of the city and the non-existence of a drainage system. Large pools of stagnant water can be seen even in the month of May and June. In Srinagar, whole colonies have become sewage to be forced back by hydraulic pressure into the sub-soil, rendering the whole land unfit for human

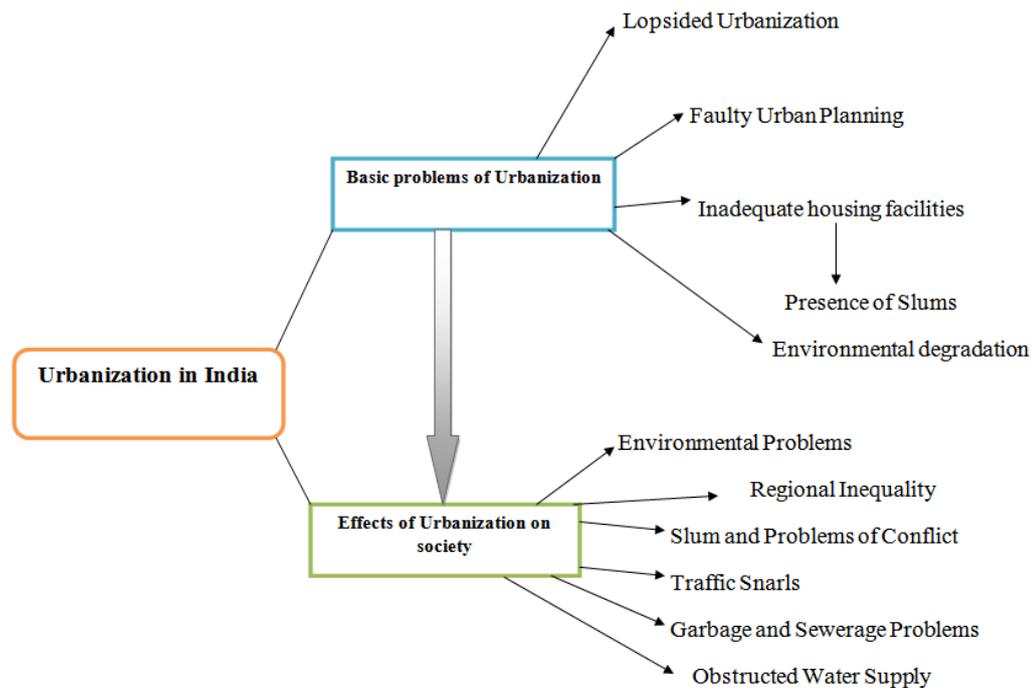
habitation. The drains, which are open, serve as depositors for road sweepings and also human wastes. In rainy season, water over flows and spreads into streets presenting a dingy view, promoting unhygienic conditions and causing outbreak of numerous diseases.

➤ **Environmental problems:-**

Environmental pollution is causing concern and affecting human health today than yester decades. It has been reported by the World Bank that 40,000 persons die in India every year because of air pollution. Recent studies also revealed that a large number of people have been suffering from respiratory diseases, allergies and cough. It has been doubled since 1990s. Further, it has been noticed that 23 Indian Cities have crossed the dangerous limits because of auto-exhausts and industrial emission. Therefore, it is not the task of Central Pollution Control Board that has to take control but it is the duty of the institutions, individuals to initiate possible care and measures to prevent the polluting works. Hence, it should initiate in the form of a social movement. This, indeed, prevents problems arising out of pollution especially in urban areas.

Conceptual Map of Urbanization in India:-

This model showcases the inter-connectedness between Problems and effects of Urbanization in India. It highlights the impact of Urbanization on Indian Society through multi-dimensional perspectives. It attempts to correlate between evils of Urbanization and its effect over growth of society.



(Source: Author)

Figure 1. Interface between Problems and Effects of Urbanization in India

7. Conclusions

Since the mega cities have reached saturation level for employment generation and to avoid over-crowding into the over-congested slums of megacities i.e Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras, it is required to build strong economic sector (Kundu and Basu, 1998) in the urban economy. Growth efforts and investments should be directed towards small cities which have been neglected so far so that functional base of urban economy is strengthened. Policy should also be related to proper urban planning where city planning will consist of operational, developmental and restorative planning. Operational planning should take care of improvement of urban infrastructure, e.g. roads, traffic, transport etc.

Developmental planning should emphasize on development of newly annexed urban areas. Restorative planning should aim to restore original status of old building monuments which have historic value. In general, urban planning must aim at following components like (a) Balanced regional and urban planning (Mukherji, 2001), (b) Development of strong economic base for urban economy (c) Integration of rural and urban sectors (Kundu, Sarangi and Dash, 2003).

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