

Urbanisation in India : An Overview

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Abstract : Urban population of the planet has crossed 51% mark and the focus has shifted to developing countries. Though urbanisation in India is 27% its urban population exceeds the total population of USA and Brazil. During the last 50 years, the rate of growth of urban population of India has been double that of the rate of growth of population. The government of India concentrated on industrialization but urbanisation was completely neglected. The combined allocation for housing, urban and regional development has never been above 2.9%. Indian cities fall well short of delivering even a basic standard of living for their residents. Though the rate of population may slow down but the rate of urbanisation cannot be arrested. An integrated approach to urban development that shall strengthen the peripheral agglomerations and rural urban continuum is called for.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Eminent sociologist Anthony Giddens defines globalization as 'transformation of time and space in our lives'. It is the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. Thus, it denotes intensification and extension of movements and flow across the globe which is essentially borderless and placeless. With urban population of the planet crossing 51% urbanization the transformation of cities in social, cultural and economic sphere depicts the visible face of globalisation. Urban based economic activities account for more than 50% of the GDP in all countries.

With only 2% of the world population urbanized in 1800 it reached 15% mark in 1900. Today almost 1,80,000 people are added to the world's urban population everyday. The growth rate for urban areas is 1.87% indicating the rapidly urbanizing world. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) estimates that by the year 2020, 60 per cent of the world's population would reside in urban centres. Urbanisation in developing countries contrasts sharply with the experience of Europe and North America. The western cities such as New York, London had reached their current size in mid-1990s and are now experiencing slow growth and decline. Now the focus has shifted to Asia, Africa and Latin America. By 2030 Asia and Africa will have higher number of urban dwellers than any other area of the world. While the African continent has the fastest rate of urbanization the Asian cities are doubling their populations every 15 to 20 years. It is projected that Asia will hold three of the world's five largest urban agglomerations- Mumbai, Dhaka and Delhi.

1.2 URBANISATION IN INDIA

India is one of the least urbanized countries in the world because between 1951 and 2001, the level of urbanization increased by 13 percentage points only. The urban population in India at the beginning of 20th century was only 25.85 million constituting 10.84 per cent of India's population in 1901, which increased to 285.35 million

comprising 27.78 per cent of total population in 2001. Though urbanisation in India is 27% its urban population exceeds the total population of USA and Brazil. Today India has the second largest urban population in the world and more than two thirds of it lives in the 393 cities that have a population of more than a lakh. During the last 50 years, the rate of growth of urban population of India has been double that of the rate of growth of population. It took nearly 40 years between 1971 and 2008 for India's urban population to rise by 230 million and it could take only half that time to add the next 250 million. According to Mckinsey Report Indian cities are likely to house 40% of the urban population by 2030. India has seen a phenomenal increase in the number of its metropolitan towns. More than half of the total urban population of India lives in small and medium towns. In the beginning, the country had only one metropolitan city, which had increased to 35 in 1991. These 35 million plus cities account for 107.9 million urban population in the country. The concentration of population in million plus cities increased significantly in the last two decades to almost two-fifth of the urban population. The four mega cities viz. Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkatta with a population of more than 6 million each in 2001 account for almost one fourth of the population living in the cities. Another three Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad, have populations ranging between 5 and 10 million. As per the projections of Government of India, the urban population of the

country in 2011 will be 405.26 million and 553.04 million in 2021. Thus around one third of population is expected to live in urban areas. Another striking feature of India's urbanization has been the concentration of urban population in Class I cities. The number of Class I cities has grown from 24 in 1901 to 423 in 2001 There has been more than fivefold increase in the number of Class I cities since 1951. The startling fact is that the proportion of population living in smaller towns has shown declining trend over the period while there is massive growth in population of larger towns. The least-developed states such as , Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh have urbanized faster than national average.

1.3 TABLE ON TREND OF URBANISATION IN INDIA

Census year	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	24521249
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 of India, 2001.

In 1901 the urban population was only 10.81% which increased to 27.78% of the total population in 2001. Between 1901 to 2001 the total population increased by about 322 per cent from 238 million to 1027 million and the urban population increased by 996 per cent from about 26 million to 285 million, while the corresponding increase in rural population was less than 250 per cent. The percentage of annual exponential growth rate of urban population reveals that in India it grew at a faster pace in 1921-1931 and until 1951. This reflects a net movement of people from villages to towns and cities associated with non-agricultural employment; especially during the Second World War. Another factor in the decade of 1941-1951 was the urban influx of refugees from Pakistan following the partition of British India. Thereafter it registered a sharp drop in 1951-61. The sharp drop in urban rate during 1951-61 was due to the declassification of a large number of towns during that period. The data indicates that the process of rapid urbanization began during the inter-war years. This was also the period of growth of industry. However the process seems to have really accelerated in the post-independence period. There has been considerable growth in industry during this period but it is the service sector which has expanded the fastest.

The underemployed and unemployed in rural areas have flocked to the cities in search of opportunities and have added to the growing pool of paid unskilled labour in the unorganized sector. The decades 1961-1971 and 1971-1981 showed a significant improvement in growth which has thereafter steadily dropped to the present level. Number of urban agglomerations has grown from 1827 in 1901 to 5161 in 2001. A majority of settlements now classified as towns since long have displayed urban characteristics for a very long time and then got elevated to the status of a town. According to 2001 census out of total population of 1027 million about 285 million live in urban areas and 742 million live in rural areas. It is projected that by 2015, 32.2 percent population will be urban.

1.4 FIVE YEAR PLANS AND URBAN SECTOR

Plan	Total Outlay	Housing and Urban development (Rs. in million)	Percentage of the total
First Plan	20688	488	2.1
Second Plan	48000	1200	2.5
Third Plan	85765	1276	1.5
Fourth Plan	157788	2702	1.7
Fifth Plan	394262	11500	2.9
Sixth Plan	975000	24884	2.6
Seventh Plan	1800000	42295	2.3
Eight Plan	4341000	105000	2.4

The combined allocation for housing, urban and regional development has never been above 2.9%.

1.5 FLIPPING THROUGH THE DECADES

The 1950s—1960s

The government of India concentrated on industrialization but urbanisation was completely neglected. No effort was made to upgrade urban services. The Ministry of Works and Housing was set up. Industrial Housing scheme was launched with 50% subsidy from the centre. Town and Country Planning Organisations in the states took up the task of preparing master plans for important towns. New city of Chandigarh was built.

The 1960s—1970s

Master plans for major cities were prepared. State capitals of Gandhinagar, Bhubnaneshwar were developed. Loans were given to state governments for acquisition and development of land for building sites. In 1970s the industrialized states in western India faced problems such as congestion, lack of social and physical infrastructure. Primate cities grew. Full fledged Municipal Corporations emerged in industrial townships. They benefitted through taxes while the mother city was reduced to a dormitory town. Project oriented sectoral approach under the influence of the World Bank was adopted to manage urban problems. Parastatals grew and concentrated on new projects and finance. But they ignored software elements like quality, tariffs, recovery measures, land acquisition, rationalization, training etc. There was growth of informal sector, unregistered factories and unauthorized encroachments 1970s—1980s Creation of smaller towns was emphasized. An ambitious scheme for Environmental

Improvement of Urban Slums was launched. Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act was enacted to prevent concentration of land holding in urban areas. The objective was to make land available for construction of houses for middle and low income groups.

1980s—1990s

National commission on Urbanisation was set up in 1985. The report admitted that on one hand our cities were engines of growth but on the other hand they had degenerated in terms of infrastructure. The commission adopted a holistic approach to development. It made detailed recommendations for urban land, housing, employment, urban poverty, design and conservation. IDSMT was launched in towns with population below one lakh to provide roads, pavements, minor civic works, bus stands, markets. UBSP was launched to ameliorate poverty in urban areas. National Housing Bank was set up to expand the base of housing finance

1990s—2000

The 74th amendment to the constitution was passed which provided local bodies a constitutional status and devolved planning responsibilities. In 1994 the Rakesh Mohan Committee Report provided comprehensive estimates of infrastructure investments required over the next ten years from 1996-2006. It emphasized active participation of domestic and foreign investors. Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) was launched in 1997 with five major components to provide gainful employment to the urban unemployed and underemployed.

2000-2010

JNNURM with its focus on improving urban infrastructure and urban poverty alleviation brought a new lease of life to 63 mission cities. Reforms were suggested in Land Revenue Act, Stamp Duty Act, Rent Control Act and Tenancy Act. National Policy on Slums was drawn up. ULCRA was repealed in many states.

1.6 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The main casualty of unplanned, imbalanced and ad

hoc approach to urban development has been the city life-deterioration in terms of quality and governance. None of the 21 megacities in the world figure in the Mercer database that ranks cities on the basis of 39 Quality of life determinants. The top 21 cities are anchored firmly in the first world. No city in India at present adequately fulfils the basic needs of citizens in terms of physical services and civic amenities. Mckinsey Report points out that across all major quality-of-life indicators, Indian cities fall well short of delivering even a basic standard of living for their residents. Across India, urban citizens have access to only 105 litres per day of potable, piped water supply, as compared to a minimum basic requirement of 150. Only 63 percent of population has access to sewerage and septic tank facilities, and only 30 percent of sewage generated actually gets treated. Class I cities such as Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Madras etc. have reached saturation level of employment generating capacity. They are not able to generate job opportunities due to capital intensive technologies. So there is transfer of rural poverty to urban poverty. The percentage of people living below the poverty line in many states is now higher in urban areas than in rural areas.

Developed States like Punjab, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have reported high level of urban poverty than rural poverty for several years. The uncontrolled migration of labour to already crowded cities and towns has led to the proliferation of slums. According to the 2001 census there are 40.6 million people living in slums in 607 towns. They have become an integral part of the city landscape. The States with high number of slum population are Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana consisting of 25.9 per cent, 25.1 per cent and 23 per cent of the urban population, respectively. In Mumbai nearly 54 percent people live in slums in utterly unhygienic conditions. Environmental degradation has manifested itself through shortage of housing, worsening water quality, excessive air pollution, noise, dust and heat, and the problems of disposal of solid wastes and hazardous wastes. The situation in metropolises like Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Delhi, Bangalore, Kanpur, Hyderabad etc., is becoming worse year by year.

Public transport system cannot cope with ever increasing population. Most municipal authorities in the country are not in a position to meet their financial needs from the internal financial resources of the area. They therefore fall back on the state government for grants. The underemployed and unemployed in rural areas have flocked to the cities in search of opportunities swelling the numbers of unskilled labour in the unorganized sector. A symbiotic relationship has emerged between the formal and informal sector. Social and economic inequalities have led to social conflicts, crimes and anti-social activities.

In light of the structural programme and shrinking agricultural sector, the future decades will witness a massive transformation of labour structure. 68 cities with a population of more than a million by 2040 is a mindboggling scale. The challenges thrown by increasing urbanization

are going to baffle the planners and city managers for decades to come. Though the rate of population may slow down but the rate of urbanisation cannot be arrested. The resource crunch faced by the cities has to be effectively dealt with. According to Mckinsey Report projections the economy will have to build 700 million sq.m residential space and 900 million sq.m commercial space a year. Current

rate of investment in infrastructure shall not sustain prosperous cities. Affordable housing, public transport, climate change, sustainable livelihoods for informal sector will become central concerns for planners. An integrated approach to urban development that shall strengthen the peripheral agglomerations and rural urban continuum is called for.

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