



The Process of Urbanisation in India: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract: *In the past few years, a large section of people have shifted from villages to cities in hope of better living conditions. This however has led to an increase in crime, poverty, lack of sanitation, traffic jams and many more problems in the cities. Despite facing these challenges, cities have also developed into hubs of culture and civilisation. This has made the cities active and alive in a different sense. According to an estimate, in 1971 around 20.2 percent of population lived in cities whereas this number rose to 31.16 percent in 2011. This large rise in city population is primarily due to migration from villages. Lack of facilities in villages forces people to migrate to cities in search of a better livelihood which leads to rapid urbanisation.*

Keywords: Urbanisation in India

Introduction: Technically, a megacity is a city with a population of over 10 million inhabitants. In 1950 there was only one megacity New York. In 1985, there were five and in 2001 this number rose to 15 including Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi from India. As of 2010 there are 25 megacities in which 19 are from developing countries. According to an estimate, this figure is expected to rise to 36 megacities. This rapid expansion means more need of resources for residents. Which leads to clearing of wetlands, forests etc to house the rapid expanding population. This unknowingly decreases the quality of life in a town. The definition of a town is a complex one as it can be constructed on the basis of demography or various other factors like density, quality of life etc. This makes it necessary to make an efficient urban planning. The definition of a town in India

was the same till the census of 1950-51 but in 1961, a new definition was brought to use. It has been estimated that in coming years, some small town are going to grow into big cities also due to rapid population expansion. To cope up with this situation in India there is a dire need of town planning. Further, we will discuss the problems and solutions to this rapid urbanisation of India.

Research Methodology: The present research paper is based on both the primary and secondary sources of data collection. Most of the research material has been taken from the census data from 1901-2011, various journals and reference books including some official websites related to the research problem. However, the research is exploratory in nature, nevertheless, to pace the study; the researcher has also used some observational facts.

Research Objectives: This research paper aims at the following research objectives:

- To know the concept of Urbanisation and its various aspects.

- To highlight the process and trends of Urbanisation in India.
- To find out the problems created by the process of Urbanisation in India.

The Concept of Urbanisation:

Generally, Urbanisation is a process of population transformation from rural areas to urban areas. According to the definition given by the United Nations, countries regard all places with more than 20,000 inhabitants living close together as urban. However, it is not as simple as it looks as nations compile their statistics on the basis of many different standards. Although, definitions might vary from nation to nation but many scholars have presented their own perspective. Louis Wirth (1938:49) has described the four basic pillars of urbanism. The ways in which urbanisation affects the urban dwellers are as follows:

- **Transiency:** An urban dweller develops new relations and breaks previous bonds. Urbanisation affects his social circle.
- **Superficiality:** An urban dweller interacts with very few people and often his relations with them are



formal or informal. People are often inter dependent on each other for a livelihood and interacts for their own personal gains.

- **Anonymity:** People living in cities often want more privacy than those in villages. Village life is more about soviet and social interaction whereas a city dweller has anonymity and limited social interaction.
- **Individualism:** In cities often a person pays more attention to his selfish motives. There is not much of communalism.

The Emerging Trends: The villages used to represent a large section of society in ancient. Even before the green revolution a large population resided in the villages of India. Then prime minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru even stated that the future of India lies in its villages. But in the modern day context, only a few people live in villages. Most of them have migrated to cities. The present trend is that more and more people are shifting towards cities and the cities which were earlier known as small cities are

now becoming bigger and overcrowded. However, it is noteworthy here that the growth of cities does not entirely depend on the migration but is affected by other factors like political, social and historical reasons. The growth of cities has also created more opportunities for labour class as construction works stay in full swing to build new infrastructure for the people coming to towns. The different town are urbanised due to different reasons. Taking a look at India scenario the reasons could be many a few of them are listed below:

- **State Capitals:** Cities like Bhopal, Jaipur and Mumbai faced heavy migration because of being the capitals of their respective state.
- **Political Importance:** Delhi had a large no. of migrants because it was the national capital and every political party wanted to establish themselves there. This was one of the many reasons.
- **Military Importance:** Certain cities like Khadagvasla, Ambala etc got more migrants because they were

important centres of military establishment.

□ **Industrial Importance:** Cities with industries are the one with most no. of migrants as industries create more job opportunities and people flock in from various states in search of job opportunity. Cities like Bhilai, Ludhiana went through this process in India.

□ **Religious Importance:** In India, religion plays a crucial role and hence cities like Varanasi, Haridwar faced rapid expansion because of these reasons.

□ **Educational Importance:** Cities like Kota, Pilani have expanded because many students migrated to study in the various educational institutions located there.

To further statistically explain the trends of urbanisation in India, take a look at the table given below:

Table 1: Urban Population and No. of Towns

S. No.	Year	Urban Population (in millions)	Urban as % of Total Population	No. of Towns
1.	1901	26	11	1,627
2.	1951	62	17.6	3,060
3.	1961	79	18.3	2,700
4.	1971	109	20.2	3,126
5.	1981	160	23.7	4,029
6.	1991	217	25.8	4,689
7.	2001	285	27.8	5,166
8.	2011	377	31.16	N.A.

(Source: Census of India, 1901-2011)

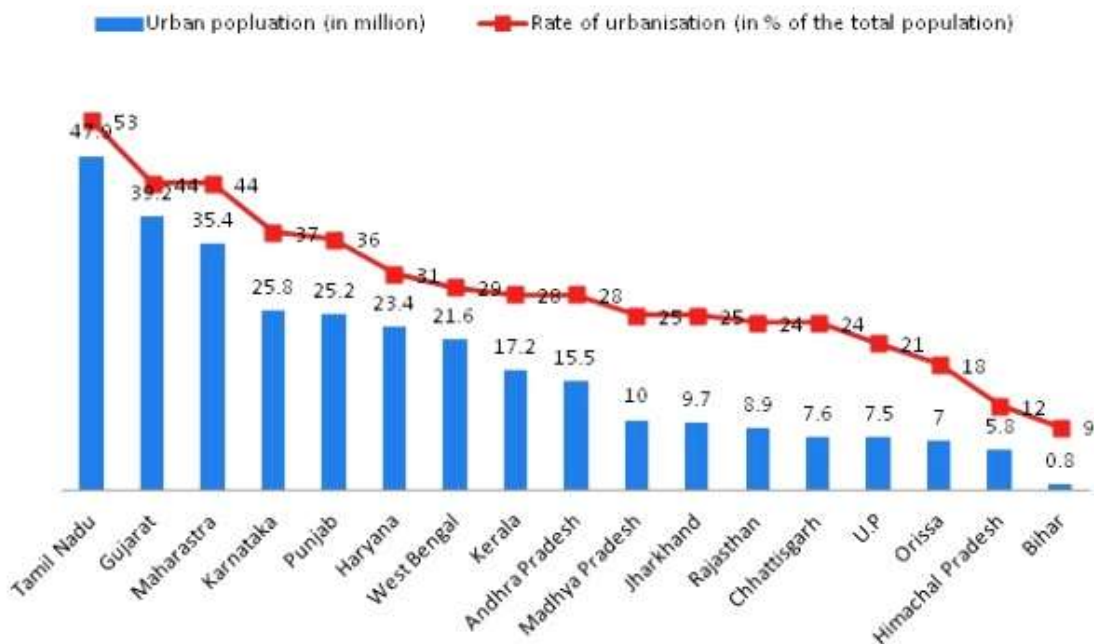
From the following table, we can analyse that the urban population was 26

million in 1901 which almost became 14 times to 377 in 2011. This rapid explosion is

clearly due to migration cause by urbanisation. Also, earlier in 1901 only 11 percent of people of India lived in cities whereas this number reached to 31.16 percent in 2011. So, now a large section of the India society lives in cities rather than its villages. Not only number of people in town has increased but the cities which were earlier just small town have developed into big towns. As we can see in the table

the number of cities in 1901 were 1,627 which increased almost four times that are 5,166 in 2001. This increase in number of towns is clearly because of the increasing demands of urbanisation. Thus, we have seen that because of urbanisation, smaller towns are turning into larger cities whereas the cities which were already large are facing a large migrant population which they have to deal with.

Rate of Urbanisation



(Source: <http://www.indiaspend.com>)



From the following figure which has statistics of 2008, we can analyse that in five major states, namely Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Punjab, had the highest rate of urbanisation and the highest population in urban areas. Tamil Nadu is tops the list of urbanisation due to certain factors like better education opportunities etc. Whereas, Gujarat is close second because of the high rate of industrialisation in this state. Gujarat is famous in India for trading and companies like AMUL. Thus the factor of industrial importance as mentioned above has lead to a high rate of urbanisation in Gujarat. Whereas Bihar is a state daunted by high corruption and poverty. Thus the rate of urbanisation is very less. But, it is noteworthy here that this does not mean there is no migration from Bihar. Migration is taking place from Bihar but the migrants are flocking to other states. Therefore, there is a complex relation between migration and urbanisation in India,

Problems of Urbanisation: As we have seen above that urbanisation puts a lot of pressure on the infrastructure of the cities. It has its own fair share of problems. Some

of the problems created because of urbanisation are:

- **Increase in Housing and Slums:** It is a huge challenge for the administration to decrease homelessness in urban cities of India. According to a report by the U.N.I. one fourth to half of the people in big cities are forced to live in slums or poor conditions. Half of the Indian population is forced to live in degraded houses or have to spend 20 percent of their income on paying rent. Because of the high demands of housing in cities, the landlords often increase the price of rent and follow unfair trade practices. Hence, either the housing is very less or the existing one is very costly.
- **Overcrowding:** Lack of housing often forces tenants to live in overcrowded conditions. Many people are forced to live in small, poor conditioned rooms. Living in overcrowded conditions affects the physiological conditions of a person .This often leads to conflicts and

fight between the tenants or creates stress, depression.

□ **Drainage and Sanitation:** It is quite well known to all the people living in cities that there is never 24 hours supply of water in the houses. Due to discontinuous supply of water, vacuum is developed in the water pipes due to which the leaking joints in the pipes attract pollutants. This often leads to contaminated water supply. Also, the sewage pipes have to carry more amount of waste than the limit because of which often sewage pipes leak and pollute the area.

□ **Traffic Congestion and Pollution:** A large no of people living in cities often commute using public transport but a major share of people use their own vehicles. This exceeds the limit of vehicles on roads and people have to often face long traffic jams which last for hours. People living in cities are very well aware of long and tedious jams. These traffic jams are huge contributors to air pollution as the

vehicles stranded in jams continuously emit fumes. Also, large population pollutes the drainage and heavy waste is generated from cities which pollute the environment. According to an estimate around 40-60 percent of this untreated waste is directly dumped into the rivers thus polluting them.

□ **Heavy Power Consumption:** Cities with their modern machinery are heavily dependent on electricity. Also, power is needed to meet the demands of a large population residing in cities. This often leads to long power cuts and lack of electricity in the urban areas.

Conclusion: To conclude, it can be said that urbanisation creates a lot of pressure on the existing infrastructure. To deal with it a few solutions can be suggested. Urban centres need to be developed and more job opportunities should be created in villages which can stop the large migration. There is also a need of regional planning along with the city planning. It is the responsibility of town planning to rise up to the occasion to

deal with rapid urbanisation needs. Industries need to be shifted to backward areas so that they can be developed instead of putting pressure on the cities. Privatisation of transportation is necessary as it will increase competition and improve service at the same time removing the autonomy of trade unions. There is also a need of rent control act which will help the city dwellers. Thus, if the management follows the above said suggestions, urbanisation can be dealt with in an easy way. Urbanisation will therefore contribute a lot to the progress of India.

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