

An Analysis upon Trends and Emerging Pattern of India's Urbanization: Some Political Challenges

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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.

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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. Kingsley Davis has explained urbanization as process of switch from spread-out pattern of human settlements to one of concentration in urban centers. It is a finite process-a cycle through which a nation passes as they evolved from agrarian to industrial society. 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. Rate of growth of urban population and total population becomes same at this terminal stage.

The world is becoming increasingly urban with 54.5% of its population living in urban areas in 2016; up from 30% in 1950. By 2050, 66% of the world's population will be urban. Given that the human habitat is becoming increasingly an urban one, there has been an urgent call for "people centered, sustainable urban development" (UN Habitat, State of the World's Cities 2012/2013) to enhance the quality of life of a majority of the earth's population

and to do it in the most environmentally sustainable way. On the one hand are optimists such as the former Secretary General of the UN, Ban ki Moon who believe that "as the world seeks a more people-centered, sustainable approach to development, cities can lead the way with local solutions to global problems" (Preface, *ibid*). But others see the future more darkly, and as the world becoming, more and more, "a planet of slums" (Davis, 2007). India, in particular, must take heed of these alternate scenarios as it will be the biggest contributor to the world's urban growth between 2014 and 2050. It is projected to add 404 million urban dwellers by 2050, exceeding China's 292 million and Nigeria's 212 million (UN, World Urbanization Prospects, 2014).

What path is India taking in its urban transition and how can it be made more "people-centered and sustainable" and more humane? This larger question is examined in my paper by a closer look at changes in the Indian state's character and ideology, the socio-political context of contemporary urban India, and public policy choices in one aspect of the country's urban transition challenge, namely, low income housing.

Political parties are considered by many as intermediate organizations between the citizen and the state. They are regarded as having an important place in a democracy, carrying the weight of expectations and aspirations upwards from citizen to state. Similarly they also take the responsibility of formulating the public policy for the

betterment of their citizens downwards, from state to citizen. This in the words of political science is known as interest articulation and interest aggregation. In this process, they perform multiple functions and develop multiple personalities as one can notice.

In recent years, reputation of both parties and leaders are in a state of disarray,. Parties and politicians have been accused of eroding the democratic system by practicing and maximizing their personal gains and influence. In short, political parties willfully pursue their own narrow political interest at the expense of the greater common good, which is actually a departure from theory. However, without their political organization and mobilization, the democratic system would not have worked. Major transformations have taken place since Independence in India's party system. The writings on these in fact examine and evaluate changes both within political parties and the party system. At the centre of the change in the party system, the rise of the BJP in India and in Karnataka, actually have contributed to a shift in politics in India should begin with an understanding of the role of political parties in democratic systems in general.

One of the most recent phenomena observed in India is the formation of urban agglomerations, which is defined as geographic concentration of urban population and economic activities. This implies that urban agglomeration includes but not equal to urbanization. Urban India has been experiencing a steady increase in the share of its urban population, emergence of new cities or towns, sizeable contribution to the country's national income, reduction of poverty, increasing inequality, and lower level of inclusive growth.

We describe urbanization trends from Census period 1961 to 2011. Urban economic growth is described from 1971 to latest available years. To measure urban equity in terms of urban poverty and inequality, the year 2009-10 is specifically chosen for the availability of latest 66th Round of National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO) Household Consumer Expenditure Survey in India for that year. The consideration of study periods is mainly based on following reasons:

First, the availability of full information for the various urban indicators used in this paper. Second, as for the first time 1961 Census has adopted the uniform and rigid definition of urban areas. Third, to present the recent past scenarios of urbanization for the relevant policy implications.

As per 2011 figures, the state has a total population of 72,597,565 persons of which the urban population comprises of 20,059,666 persons accounting for an urban population of 27.6 percent which is an increase from the urban population of 26.5 percent reported in 2001. The number of towns in the state have increased from 394 in 2001 to 476 in 2011. A

look at the decennial status of towns, from 1901-2011, reveals that the number of towns in Madhya Pradesh have grown more rapidly in comparison to the national average figures.

Urban development as a reflection of overall development process cannot remain outside the purview of the political system of the country. Accordingly the politicians and the civil servants in India take the most active part in the policy formulation process in the urban context. However, no direct declaration was made about the intention and purposes in the constitution of India in regard to the aims and objectives of urban development in the country. The lack of explicit constitutional status of cities and towns were explained in terms of "anti-urban bias" at the higher level of policy formulation 1 (Raheja, 1973). During the initial state building and reconstruction process the role of cities were not emphasized. The Gandhian model stressed on self-reliant village and Nehruvian model was concerned with the growth of a modern society as a part of nation building process. The lack of consideration of urban issues in the early years of development planning in India can also be seen as the nationalist legacy of developing villages 2 (Batra, 2012).

The demarcation of functional domain of federating units in India under the seventh schedule of the constitution gives the picture of involvement of the central and the state governments. The scheme of allocation of functional responsibilities between the union and the state government give the states the responsibility of legislating on the subject of urban development as its vital aspects like land development, water supply, public health, sanitation have been included in the state list. The power of determination of industrial location, however, rests on the Union Government, which plays a major decisive role in the growth and development of cities and towns. Centre has taken steps in urban legislation, in initiating several schemes and programmes to promote decentralization and empowerment of urban local governments. However, the significant focus on the issue was made in 1985 with the creation of Ministry of Urban Development, in the Govt. of India. Prior to that, changes were made in the urban development management scenario with the creation of Slum Improvement Boards, Housing Boards, Integrated Urban Development Programme, promulgation of Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act and creation of Housing and Urban Development Corporation.

URBANIZATION IN INDIA

India shares most characteristic features of urbanization in the developing countries. It is the most significant phenomenon of 21st 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. 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. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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. 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.

TRENDS IN URBANISATION

The Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India projected the urban population for the year 2011 to 358 million, and estimated that urban population growth rates would decline from 2.75% per annum observed during 1991-2001 to 2.23 during 2001-2011 (Registrar

General and Census Commissioner 2006). Urban experts also believed that India's urbanisation would slow down because of its exclusionary nature and its inability to spur rural-to-urban migration (Kundu 2007, 2011). However, the 2011 Census shows some unexpected results. According to the 2011 Census, the urban population grew to 377 million showing a growth rate of 2.76% per annum during 2001-2011. The level of urbanisation in the country as a whole increased from 27.7% in 2001 to 31.1% in 2011 – an increase of 3.3 percentage points during 2001-2011 compared to an increase of 2.1 percentage points during 1991-2001. It may be noted that the Indian economy has grown from about 6% per annum during the 1990s to about 8% during the first decade of the 2000s (Ahluwalia 2011). This clearly reflects the power of economic growth in bringing about faster urbanisation during 2001-2011.

It is worthwhile to note that urban population growth alone cannot speed up urbanisation. More importantly, if urbanisation has to occur, the urban population growth rate needs to be higher than the rural population growth rate. Thus, it is the urban-rural population growth differential that is critical to the process of urbanisation.

URBAN GOVERNMENTS IN INDIA

Local Government in the urban or rural form are here to stay. The need for local government was realized even in the ancient times. Local institutions in ancient Greece, China and India, played a vital role in the socio economic life of the people. One of the marked features of ancient Hindu civilization was the remarkable development of associated life that grand independently of king doms and yet achieved completeness in different spheres of life. Different spheres of life like religion, learning, politics, civics and economics; organizations grew up on a democratic basis with natural respect and tolerance for the betterment of national life. Urban Local governments in fact played a vital role in this.¹ Professor M. Venkatarangaiya is of the opinion that the local self- government bodies in those days were far more real, for more widespread and far more successful than during British rule.

Local government is an important component of every system of governmental system irrespective of its political form of governance. It is recognized and created under law for the management of local affairs by the concerned governments in a given geographic boundary. Local government is a realization of Decentralization concept like other levels of government. Local government embraces the principle of sharing power, among the totality of its residents. It also embodies authority in relation to local residents but unlike other levels of government, its authority is Jurisdictional in content. The jurisdiction of local government is limited to a delimited area and its functions largely

relate to the provision of civic amenities to the population within its jurisdiction. It is subordinate to the state or provincial government which exercises control and supervision over it. Under certain circumstances, the state government can suspend or dissolve a local government.

According to William A. Robson, Local Self Government may be said to involve the conception of a territorial, non sovereign community possessing the legal right and the necessary organization to regulate its own affairs. This in turn presupposes the existence of local authority with power to act independently of external control as well as the participation of the local community in the administration of its own affairs.

It is only through participation in local government at all levels that political education of this sort can be obtained by the citizens in a democracy. A high power central committee in India has rightly summed up the place of local bodies in the government structure in the following words: Local bodies are important units to help achieve the decentralization of political power and promotion of democratic values. They are also an indispensable part of governmental machinery contributing to the efficiency at the higher echelons of government by relieving them of purely local tasks.

Local government can also be more efficient in routine matters by avoiding the inflexibilities inherent in a centralized system. As against departmental specialization at the central and state levels local bodies are the media through which functional compartmentalization can be channelised into a co-ordinate plan of all-round development at the community level.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF URBAN INDIA

Changes in the character and ideology of the Indian state since the late 1980s must be viewed alongside changes in the socio-political context of urban India. Throughout the last century, despite the presence of several large metropolitan cities, the percentage of India's urban population grew relatively slowly with the majority of the country's people living in rural areas. That is set to change in this century with India becoming 50% urban by 2050 and its 2011 urban population of 377 million increasing to around 800 million by mid-century (UN, 2014). Such a large urban population base, both presently and in the coming decades, presents many challenges including that of maintaining the economic dynamism of urban areas, enhancing their livability and ensuring their inclusiveness.

The processes by which India is becoming more urban need to be differentiated. The first and most observable process has been that of metropolization

or growth in number and size of its largest cities. Today, around 42% of its urban population lives in cities with one million and above population. There are currently 53 such cities. By 2021, they are likely to increase to 68. These million cities have been regarded as the country's 'engines of growth' and deserving of special financial attention. Since 2005 with the launching of JNNURM (Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission) by the central government under the UPA and its present counterpart AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation), in 2015, by the Modi government, the larger cities of the country and the more urbanized states have benefitted (Sivaramakrishnan, 2011). A second process, less studied than the first, is that of ruralization or the gradual blurring of the sharp differences between rural and urban areas resulting in areas showing a mix of both rural and urban traits (Dasgupta, 2015). An acceleration of this process in the last decade is seen in the big increase in new towns which are formerly rural areas that have been transformed into urban ones. Closer connectivity to urban areas, rising literacy levels and aspirations, adoption of urban ways of life together with an increase in non-farm activities mark such areas. In many cases such change has been occurring quite far away from an existing city or town leading some scholars to regard the transformation as autonomous or generated from forces internal to the settlement. Termed as 'subaltern urbanization' and 'unacknowledged urbanization' it marks a sharp contrast to urban growth processes at the top of the urban system (Pradhan, 2013). In these ways the world's second largest urban system (in terms of population size) is facing change, both at the top end as well as at the bottom end.

In the past ten years, a considerable amount of research has been done on the urban impacts of economic liberalization and globalization covering changes in urban law and regulations (Shaw, 2012a); the formal built environment through the construction of new shopping malls, high rise residential towers, commercial real estate, IT parks, new restaurants and other consumer services, along with an expanding network of metro rail lines and widened roads (Shaw, 2012b); processes of planning through a greater role for private sector advisors and external consultants in policy making; and the organizational structure of urban service delivery bodies, such as the Chennai Water Board. Urban sector reforms launched through JNNURM have encouraged a more marketized approach to governance over issues such as access to water supply, urban land and housing (Banerjee-Guha, 2009).

URBANIZATION PATTERN

An important feature of urbanization in India is dualism—urban growth at macro level is decelerating but in class I cities it is growing. An

analysis of the distribution of urban population across size categories reveals that the process of urbanization in India has been large city oriented. This is manifested in a high percentage of urban population being concentrated in class I cities, which has gone up systematically over the decades in the last century.

The massive increase in the percentage share of urban population in class I cities from 26.0 in 1901 to 68.7 in 2001 has often been attributed to faster growth of large cities, without taking into consideration the increase in the number of these cities.

The growth pattern of metro cities—cities having population of a million or more—corroborate further the thesis of concentrated urban development. The demographic growth in metro cities has been higher than that of common towns or even the class I cities in recent decades.

The growth would have been even higher but for the location of large industrial units outside the municipal limits, thanks to the pressures exerted by the environment lobby. This is facilitated by easy availability of land, access to unorganized labour market, besides lesser awareness and less stringent implementation of environmental regulations in the rural settlements at the urban periphery. The poor are able to build shelters in these 'degenerated peripheries' and find jobs in the industries located therein or commute to the central city for work.

POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Urban development policy in India is to be understood in terms of several policy statements of the government instead of relying on a single set of policy declaration. Various suggestions as policy guidance's have been made from time to time in the light of rapid urbanization. The National plan documents, recommendations of different committees and commission set up by government, governments policy on slums and town improvement, various schemes, the Urban Land Policy, Housing Policy, Policy on urban environment, infrastructural arrangements serve as important indicators of the government of India's perspective of urban development. Such a range of policy contents reflect the highly complicated character of urban development process and interrelationships between various associated elements.

In searching for major components of an urban development policy in India, it can be easily accepted that it must be conducive for economic development of the country. In this context, it is recognized fact that the urban sectors have to play a positive role in bringing backward regions to the path of economic development and have to provide a sound infrastructural basis for urban environment and activities. The process of urban development

manifests the socio-cultural, economic-physical and political-administrative dimensions of the urbanization pattern in the society. As identified by an expert involved in the urban development activities in the field:

The basic objective of urban development activity is to achieve balanced development for all aspects of urban life, physical, social, economic in a comprehensive manner. The sectors that are of direct importance for the local authorities and development authorities include physical infrastructures like water supply, drainage and sanitation, solid waste management, transport, shelter, and also the social infrastructures like parks and community open spaces, health, education, security and community development for urban poor.

The issues related to urban development process therefore are significantly related to the development Management. An efficient management system for the urban development can be envisaged as a tool in channelizing the process in a desired manner particularly in the physical aspects. For a student of urbanization pattern in India it is not difficult to identify the intended and unintended pattern of urban development as it is virtually related to urban life. The growth of slum and squatter settlements, unauthorized use of land, encroachments, violation of Master plans are some of the physical aspect unintended urban development process in the cities of developing societies. Therefore, urban policy administration system has to be a major component of urban development policy, which, as we shall see now is not comprehensively highlighted in urban policy declaration of government of India. From the survey of Plan documents and other related policy declaration of government of India, the issues taken up by the government of India can be classified into following ranges.

Urban land development; urban infrastructure ; policies related to improvement of small and medium towns along with the growth of big cities; Slum improvement; Remedy for pathological issues; Regional development; Urban development as an adjunct to economic development; the identification of functional characteristics of the city in relation to its hinterlands and in case of primate character the relationship with the region of which it is a part; town planning; devolution of funds and revitalization of civic bodies. All these aspects have been echoed in varying degrees in the government of India's perspectives of urban development.

CONCLUSION

The process of urbanisation in India has continued to be top-heavy, oriented towards large cities. This is because of higher demographic growth in larger cities, attributable to both natural increase in the

resident population (which, though based on lower fertility than in rural areas and smaller towns, still brings huge increments because of the size of the base population) and higher net in-migration. In turn, this is consistent with the fact that larger cities are generally more efficient in generating growth and attracting investments, thus attracting more population. An understanding of the urbanization process in India reveals that the pre-existing system of settlements, based on interactions between a large number of handicraft-, service- and commerce-based towns and their hinterland of primary production, as well as between large cities and smaller towns, was disrupted during the colonial period. The country was gradually drawn into the orbit of the capitalistic system during two centuries of colonial rule, but the political economy of the regime became an impediment to technological advancement in different sectors of the economy and led to a top-heavy urban structure.

There is a reflection in urban development policy in India of some influencing trends in the political system itself, which are corollaries of economic development strategies in general. It started with the approach of regional development planning, continuing with ad hoc comprehensive development programmes along with the master plan approach; it took a formidable turn towards pro liberal economic policy with emphasis on market and external assistance. 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 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.

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