

Some Evidences of India's Urbanization Growth Trends

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Abstract

The term "urbanisation" refers to the gradual concentration of people in urban areas. The beginning of the contemporary, worldwide process of urbanisation is a relatively new phenomenon, closely linked to the industrial revolution and economic prosperity. In India, urbanisation is partly owing to economic liberalisation in the 1990s, which ushered in privatisation and the growth of the private sector. In the current context, India's urbanisation is progressing at a quicker rate, although just one-third of the population lives in cities. As a result, this article examines urbanisation patterns in India.

Key words: urbanisation, economic development, urban population, components or urban growth

1.1 Introduction

The concept of urbanization refers to increasing share of a nation's population living in urban areas, resulting in declining share living in rural areas. As a result, urbanisation can be characterised as a process that manifests itself in the demographic, social, economic, technological, and environmental aspects of life in a given society through temporal, geographical, and sectoral changes. The term urbanisation refers to the gradual concentration of people in urban areas. The inception of recent modern and universal process of urbanization is relatively a new spectacle, closely associated with industrial revolution and economic development. Urbanization in India is largely due to economic liberalization after the 1990s, which has resulted in the birth of privatization and the development of the private sector. In the present scenario, though urbanization is taking its pace at a faster rate in India, but it's only one-third of population lives in urban areas.

In the year 1950, only around 30% of the world population lived in urban areas, which was increased to above 50 % in 2012. According to estimates, India's urban population accounted for around 10% of the world's urban population and about 21% of Asia's. According to a survey by UN, in the year 2030, more than 70% of world people will be residing in urban areas. Further, it has been projected that 40.76% of India's population is likely to reside in urban areas. This analysis clearly opines that India is facing the stage of massive urban transition. After China, India has the world's second-largest urban population. Natural growth and rural-to-urban migration have both contributed to India's urbanisation. In India, urban poverty has arisen as a result of a lack of employment possibilities and inadequate income among a significant portion of the urban population.

1.2 Components of urban development

The components of urban expansion can be divided into three categories: Natural growth, net migration, and area re-classification are the three main contributors, with natural growth accounting for 41.7 percent between 1971 and 1981 and 58.7 percent between 1981

and 1991. During 1971-81, net migration and changes in municipal boundaries accounted for 39.4 percent of the total, but this fell to 22 percent in 1981-91. One aspect of the transformation is the movement of employment from farmland to urban-based industry and services.

Table 1: Degree of Urbanization in India (1901 – 2011)

Census Years	Total Population	Urban Population	Urban (Percent)	Rural Population	Rural (Percent)	Urban-Rural Ratio ¹ (Percent)
1901	238396327	25851873	10.84	212544454	89.15	12.16
1911	252093390	25941633	10.29	226151757	89.71	11.47
1921	251321213	28086167	11.18	223235046	88.82	12.58
1931	278977238	33455989	11.99	245521249	88.01	13.63
1941	318660580	44153297	13.86	274507283	86.14	16.08
1951	361088090	62443709	17.29	298644381	82.71	20.91
1961	439234771	78936603	17.97	360298168	82.03	21.91
1971	598159652	109113977	18.24	489045675	81.76	22.31
1981	683329097	159462547	23.33	523866550	76.66	30.44
1991	844324222	217177625	25.72	627146597	74.28	34.63
2001	1027015247	285354954	27.78	741660293	72.22	38.47
2011	1210569573	377106125	31.15	833463448	68.84	45.24

Source: Calculated from Census Reports

Table 1 depicts figures of the urban and rural population and also the significant differences in the urban-rural ratio from 1901 to 2001. Since 1971, there has been a considerable increase in the growth of the urban population while a large fall in the rural population. The proportion of the country's population living in cities has climbed from roughly 11% in 1901 to 31% in 2011. As a result, while the country's urban population has expanded by more than tenfold, the country's level of urbanisation has only increased by around two and a half times in the last 110 years. Natural rise, establishment of new towns, merger of towns and jurisdictional changes in agglomerations, and rural-urban migration are the four key reasons for the growth of India's urban population. Natural growth accounted for 61.3 percent and 59.4 percent of the overall rise in urban population in the 1971-81 and 1981-91 decades, respectively, according to available data.

The natural growth rate of urban population fell in the 1991-2001 decade as well. Over the decades, the rate of urban growth outside of existing agglomerations and urbanised regions has declined. Extension of municipal boundaries, merger of ancient towns, and incorporation of new towns into existing urban agglomerations were all regarded small contributors to urban population growth between 1960 and 1980. The urban population, on the other hand, increased from 7.6% in 1991 to 13.0% in 2001. In the 1990s, rural-urban migration was estimated to contribute 20%, which was slightly less than the previous decade. In 2011, urbanisation grew

¹ The urban-rural population ratio may be expressed as $UR = U/R$, where, UR is the Urban-rural ratio, and U and R are the urban and the rural populations respectively.

faster than projected. For the first time since independence, the growth of the urban population outpaced the growth of the rural population. This has had major implications for the provision of infrastructure and other civic amenities in metropolitan areas.

1.3 Decadal Growth Rate of Urban Population

Table 2 depicts an overview of the decadal increase in the urban population of India for the census years from 1901 to 2011. India's urban structure continues to take momentum with a relatively low share of 31.2 percent as urban population in 2011, but is quite high in absolute terms accounting to around 377.1 million. The urban population is increasing every year and the rural population continues to decline, rural urban migration being the major cause for such trend. Further, the identification of new urban settlements in the recent years have resulted in a change in conceptualising the term urban. The differences between the rural and urban migration have been quite significant in the past few decades. Anyways, rural population continues to be still predominant, in spite of its declining trend to around 20 percent in the last 11 decades.

Due to the terrible plague epidemic of 1911, which spread mostly in urban areas and forced the evacuation of urban populations to rural areas, the urban population remained steady from 1901 and 1911. After 1921, the pace of urbanisation increased continuously and rapidly, especially during the decade 1941–51, when the decennial urban growth rate reached 41.4 percent due to the country's split in 1947. The urban population got hiked to peak after 1971 and since then has been on increase. Considering the decadal growth rate, for the urban population, it has marginally increased from 31.2% in 2001 to 31.8% in 2011. During 1901 to 1951, the total population increased about two and a half times, but from 1951 to 2011, urban population has gone up almost five times. Urban population growth has resulted in the transformation of villages into new towns and cities welcoming them into the folds of urban contours.

Table 2: Decadal Growth Rate of Urban Population in India (1901-2011)

Census Years	Total Population (In million)	Urban Population (In million)	Urban Population (%)	Rural Population (In million)	Rural Population (%)	Decadal Growth Rate (DGR) in Urban population ² (%)
1901	232.9	25.8	11	212.5	89	-
1911	252	25.9	10.4	226.1	89.6	0
1921	251.3	28.1	11.3	223.2	88.7	8.3
1931	278.9	33.4	12.2	245.5	87.8	19.1
1941	318.6	44.2	14.1	274.5	85.9	32.1
1951	361.1	62.4	17.3	298.7	82.7	43.2
1961	439.2	78.9	18	360.3	82	25.3
1971	598.2	109.1	19.9	489.1	80.1	38
1981	685.2	159.5	23.3	525.7	76.7	46.8
1991	844.3	217.2	25.7	627.1	74.3	35.06

² DGR is used to evaluate and compare population growth rate. It can be derived by applying the following formula – $DGR = \frac{P_n - P_o}{P_o} \times 100$. P_n is present population, P_o is original population. P_o and P_n are ten years apart.

2001	1027	285.1	27.8	741.6	72.2	31.2
2011	1210.1	377.1	31.2	833	68.8	31.8

Source: Census Reports, GOI, 1901-2011

1.4 Trends in India's urbanization

Table 3 depicts the trends in India's urbanization by using data from Census of India 1901-2001. This will aid in comprehending the course of urban growth and its repercussions, which have significant policy significance. The post-independence period data indicates that the rate of growth of urban population has heightened greatly till 1981. The data also postulates that there has been an increase in India's urban population from 25.85 million in 1901 to 377.10 million in 2011 owing to rapid industrialization process and rural-urban migration. There has also been a simultaneous increase in the urban percentage from 11% in 1901 to 31% in 2011; however, urbanization in India tends to be relatively slow compared to many other developing countries. In 2001, India's urbanisation rate was 27.86 percent, which was significantly lower than the norm for developing countries (40 per cent in 2001). In addition, the World Bank predicts a 34% growth in urban population in 2017. Only in the post-independence era did urbanisation begin to gain traction. The highest rate of urban population increase was 3.83 percent per year in the 1970s, which was also the highest pace in the previous century.

During the years 1981-1991 and 1991-2001, the rate of urban population growth and urbanisation showed a downward tendency. This steady reduction in the rate of urbanisation became a source of concern, drawing academics, planners, and policymakers' attention. The urban population has significantly grown from 27.87 percent to 31.16 percent, an increase of around 3 percent which clearly remarks that India's accelerated economic growth rate of 5.5 percent in early 2000's and around 7 percent in past one decade brought in speedy urbanization during 2001 to 2011. In this context, it is pertinent to note that the Indian economy has grown from about 6% per annum during the 1990s to about 8% during the first decade of the 2000s. This growth is certainly attributed to New Economic Policy of 1991, the LPG Model of Growth. This clearly replicates the power of economic growth in bringing about faster urbanisation during the period of 2001-2011. Further, the unprecedented scale of urbanization is also due to rising global urban population in the recent years.

Table 3: Trends in India's Urbanization

Census Years	Urban Population (In million)	Urban Population/ Level of Urbanization (%)	Decennial Growth Rate (%)	Annual exponential urban growth rate ³ (%)
1901	25.85	10.84	-	-
1911	25.94	10.29	0.35	0.03
1921	28.07	11.17	8.20	0.79
1931	33.46	11.99	19.20	1.76
1941	44.15	13.86	31.97	2.77
1951	62.44	17.29	41.42	3.47
1961	78.94	17.97	26.41	2.34

³ Annual exponential rate of growth of the urban population over a given period is calculated as $\ln(U_t/U_0)/n$, where n is the length of the period and U is the urban population. It is expressed in terms of percentage.

1971	109.11	19.91	38.23	3.24
1981	159.46	23.34	46.14	3.79
1991	217.18	25.72	36.19	3.09
2001	286.12	27.86	31.74	2.75
2011	377.10	31.16	31.08	2.76

Source: Census of India (various years)

Conclusion

In India, urbanisation is partly owing to economic liberalisation in the 1990s, which ushered in privatisation and the growth of the private sector. In the current context, India's urbanisation is progressing at a quicker rate, although just one-third of the population lives in cities. The proportion of the country's population living in cities has climbed from roughly 11% in 1901 to 31% in 2011. As a result, while the country's urban population has expanded by more than tenfold, the country's level of urbanisation has only increased by around two and a half times in the last 110 years. The four main factors for India's urban population increase are natural growth, the development of new towns, mergers of towns and jurisdictional changes in agglomerations, and rural-urban migration.

Every year, the urban population grows while the rural population shrinks, with rural-to-urban migration being the primary reason of this trend. Furthermore, the discovery of new urban settlements in recent years has resulted in a shift in how the term "urban" is understood. After 1971, the urban population peaked, and it has been steadily increasing since then. In terms of decadal growth, the urban population has increased slightly from 31.2 percent in 2001 to 31.8 percent in 2011. In 2001, India's urbanisation rate was 27.86 percent, which was significantly lower than the norm for developing countries (40 per cent in 2001). This expansion can undoubtedly be linked to the LPG Model of Growth, which was introduced in 1991 as part of the New Economic Policy. During the period 2001-2011, this clearly demonstrates the power of economic growth in accelerating urbanisation. Furthermore, the unprecedented extent of urbanisation is attributed to the recent rise in worldwide urban population.

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