

***PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF URBANIZATION IN INDIA***

**By Gulshan Miyagamwala**

**Abstract:**

Urbanization has become the talk of the hour. Growth of Industries especially service sector had contributed to the growth of cities. As a result of industrialization people have started moving towards the industrial areas in search of employment. This has resulted in the growth of towns and cities from tier 1 to tier 3. On the way of urbanization, we develop the economy first and improve the quality of people's life later. Urbanization in India has become an important and irreversible process, and an important determinant of national economic growth and poverty reduction. The process of urbanization is characterized by a most dramatic increase in the number of large cities, although India may be said to be in the midst of transition from a predominantly rural to a quasi-urban society. Dedicated to the development of the urbanization, their respective pros and cons have been discussed. While urbanization is a powerful "master" process of long historical duration, current vibrancy, and even stronger future impact, it is not monolithic or one-dimensional. On the contrary, urbanization carries several important dimensions that collectively and individually produce macro and micro impacts on the society and everyday life.

**Keywords**

Urbanization, Poverty, Rising Levels of Pollution, Population Explosion, Economic Disparity, Crime, Traffic Safety and Accessibility, Overcrowding and Slums,

### **Introduction**

Urbanization is relevant to a range of disciplines, including geography, sociology, economics, urban planning, and public health. The phenomenon has been closely linked to modernization, industrialization, and the sociological process of rationalization. In today's increasingly global and interconnected world, over half of the world's population lives in urban areas although there is still substantial variability in the levels of urbanization across countries. The continuing urbanization and overall growth of the world's population is projected to add 2.5 billion people to the urban population by 2050, with nearly 90 per cent of the increase concentrated in Asia and Africa. At the same time, the proportion of the world's population living in urban areas is expected to increase, reaching 66 per cent by 2050. There is great diversity in the characteristics of the world's urban environs: close to half of urban dwellers reside in relatively small settlements of less than 500,000 inhabitants, while nearly one in eight live in the 28 mega-cities of 10 million inhabitants or more. The number of mega-cities has nearly tripled since 1990; and by 2030, 41 urban agglomerations are projected to house at least 10 million inhabitants each. The process of urbanization historically has been associated with other important economic and social transformations, which have brought greater geographic mobility, lower fertility, longer life expectancy and population ageing. Cities are important drivers of development and poverty reduction in both urban and rural areas, as they concentrate much of the national economic activity, government, commerce and transportation, and provide crucial links with rural areas, between cities, and across international borders. Urban living is often associated with higher levels of literacy and education, better health, greater access to social services, and enhanced opportunities for cultural and political participation. Urbanization is integrally connected to the three pillars of sustainable development: economic development, social development and environmental protection.

### **Objectives**

- To know the urbanization.
- To analyze the problems and challenges of urbanization in India.

### **Methodology**

This research paper focuses on problems and challenges of urbanization in India is based on secondary source. Data are drawn classified from the Publications of books, monthly journals, article, and magazines, produced by the State Government, comprising literature review, and population census.

### **Causes of Urbanization**

Various reasons have led to the growth of cities. They are as follows:

#### **i. Industrialization**

Industrialization is a major cause of urbanization. It has expanded the employment opportunities. Rural people have migrated to cities on account of better employment opportunities.

#### **ii. Social factors**

Many social factors such as attraction of cities, better standard of living, better educational facilities, need for status also induce people to migrate to cities.

#### **iii. Employment opportunities**

In rural sector people have to depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihood. But Indian agriculture is depending on monsoon. In drought situations or natural calamities, rural people have to migrate to cities.

#### **iv. Modernization**

Urban areas are characterized by sophisticated technology better infrastructure, communication, medical facilities, etc. People feel that they can lead a comfortable life in cities and migrate to cities.

**Major Problems of Urbanization** The sheer magnitude of the urban population, haphazard and unplanned growth of urban areas, and a desperate lack of infrastructure are the main causes of

such a situation. The rapid growth of urban population both natural and through migration, has put heavy pressure on public utilities like housing, sanitation, transport, water, electricity, health, education and so on. Some of the major **problems** of urbanization in India are:

### **1. Urban Sprawl**

Urban sprawl or real expansion of the cities, both in population and geographical area, of rapidly growing cities is the root cause of urban problems. Massive immigration from rural areas as well as from small towns into big cities has taken place almost consistently; thereby adding to the size of cities. The first large flow of migration from rural to urban areas was during the “depression” of late 1930s when people migrated in search of jobs. Later, during the decade 1941-51, another a million persons moved to urban places in response to wartime industrialization and partition of the country in 1947.

During 1991-2001, well over 20 million people migrated to cities. This is due to the fact that such large cities act as magnets and attract large number of immigrants. Urban sprawl is taking place at the cost of valuable agricultural land.

### **2. Overcrowding**

Overcrowding is a situation in which too many people live in too little space. This is well exhibited by almost all the big cities of India. For example, Mumbai has one-sixth of an acre open space per thousand populations though four acre is suggested standard by the Master Plan of Greater Mumbai. Delhi has a population density of 9,340 persons per sq. km (Census 2001) which is the highest in India. This leads to tremendous pressure on infrastructural facilities like housing, electricity, water, transport, employment, etc.

### **3. Housing**

Overcrowding leads to a chronic problem of shortage of houses in urban areas. This problem is specifically more acute in those urban areas where there is large influx of unemployed or underemployed immigrants who have no place to live in when they enter cities/towns from the surrounding areas. Moreover, the current rate of housing construction is very slow which makes

the problem further complicated. Indian cities require annually about 2.5 million new dwelling's but less than 15 per cent of the requirement is being constructed. Several factors are responsible for the sad state of affairs with respect to housing problems faced by the urban people. The major factors are shortage of building materials and financial resources, inadequate expansion of public utilities into sub-urban areas, poverty and unemployment of urban immigrants, strong caste and family ties and lack of adequate transportation to sub-urban areas where most of the vacant land for new construction is located.

#### **4. Unemployment**

The problem of unemployment is no less serious than the problem of housing mentioned above. Urban unemployment in India is estimated at 15 to 25 per cent of the labor force. This percentage is even higher among the educated people. It is estimated that about half of all educated urban unemployed are concentrated in four metropolitan cities (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai). Furthermore, although urban incomes are higher than the rural incomes, they are appallingly low in view of high cost of living in urban areas.

One of the major causes of urban unemployment is the large scale migration of people from rural to urban areas.

#### **5. Slums and Squatter Settlements**

The natural sequel of unchecked, unplanned and haphazard growth of urban areas is the growth and spread of slums and squatter settlements which present a striking feature in the ecological structure of Indian cities, especially of metropolitan centers. The rapid urbanization in conjunction with industrialization has resulted in the growth of slums.

##### **Squatter Settlements**

No clear-cut distinction can be drawn between slums and squatter settlements in practice except that slums are relatively more stable and are located in older, inner parts of cities compared to

squatter settlements which are relatively temporary and are often scattered in all parts of the city, especially outer zones where urban areas merge with their rural hinterland.

Normally, squatter settlements contain makeshift dwellings constructed without official permission (i.e., on unauthorized land). Such settlements are constructed by using any available material such as cardboards, tin, straw mats or sacks. Squatter settlements are constructed in an uncontrolled manner and badly lack essential public services such as water, light, sewage. Such an environment leads to several health problems.

### **6. Transport**

With traffic bottleneck and traffic congestion, almost all cities and towns of India are suffering from acute form of transport problem. Transport problems increase and become more complex as the town grows in size. Such areas include the roads leading to factories, offices, schools, etc., which will be thronged with people in morning and evening; minor shopping centers which grow up in the suburbs; sporting arenas, entertainment districts which will be busy at night, roads leading to residential and dormitory towns which will be busy when commuters flock to the cities in the morning to work and return home in the evenings.

### **7. Water**

Today we have reached a stage where practically no city in India/ gets sufficient water to meet the needs of city dwellers. In many cities people get water from the municipal sources for less than half an hour every alternate day. In dry summer season, taps remain dry for days together and people are denied water supply at a time when they need it the most.

The individual towns require water in larger quantities. Many small towns have no main water supply at all and depend on such sources as individual tube wells, household open wells or even rivers. Accelerated Urban Water Supply Program me (AUWSP) was launched to provide water to towns with population of less than 20,000. The Zakaria Committee recommended the water requirement per head per day 204 liters for cities with population between 5 lakh and 2 million

and 272 liters for cities with population more than 2 million. This amount of water is supposed to be used for drinking, kitchen, bathing, cloth washing, floor and vehicle washing and gardening.

Sadly majority of the cities and towns do not get the recommended quantity of water.

### **8. Sewerage Problems**

Urban areas in India are almost invariably plagued with insufficient and inefficient sewage facilities. Not a single city in India is fully sewer aged Resource crunch faced by the municipalities and unauthorized growth of the cities are two major causes of this pathetic state of affairs.

### **9. Trash Disposal**

Huge quantities of garbage produced by our cities pose a serious health problem. Most cities do not have proper arrangements for garbage disposal and the existing landfills are full to the brim. Wastes putrefy in the open inviting disease carrying flies and rats and a filthy, poisonous liquid, called leachate, which leaks out from below and contaminates ground water. People who live near the rotting garbage and raw sewage fall easy victims to several diseases like dysentery, malaria, plague, jaundice, diarrhea, typhoid, etc.

### **10. Urban Crimes**

Like other problems, the problem of crimes increases with the increase in urbanization. In fact the increasing trend in urban crimes tends to disturb peace and tranquility of the cities and make them unsafe to live in particularly for the women.

Growing materialism, consumerism, and competition in everyday life, selfishness, lavishness, appalling socio-economic disparities and rising unemployment and feeling of loneliness in the crowd are some of the primary causes responsible for alarming trends in urban crime.

### **11. Problem of Urban Pollution**

With rapid pace of urbanization, industries and transport systems grow rather out of proportion. These developments are primarily responsible for pollution of environment, particularly the urban environment.

We cannot think of strong India, economically, socially and culturally, when our cities remain squalor, quality of urban life declines and the urban environment is damaged beyond repair. As a matter of fact, cities comprise the backbone of economic expansion and urbanization is being seen in a positive light as an engine of economic growth and agent of socio-political transformation.

### **Economic impact of Urbanization**

In recent years, urbanization of rural areas has increased. As agriculture, more traditional local services, and small-scale industry give way to modern industry. Research in urban ecology finds that larger cities provide more specialized goods and services to the local market and surrounding areas, function as a transportation and wholesale hub for smaller places, and accumulate more capital, financial service provision, and an educated labour force, as well as often concentrating administrative functions for the area in which they lie. This relation among places of different sizes is called the hierarchy. As cities develop, effects can include a dramatic increase in costs, often pricing the local working class out of the market, including such functionaries as employees of the local municipalities. Urbanization is often viewed as a negative trend, but can in fact, be perceived simply as a natural occurrence from individual and corporate efforts to reduce expense in commuting and transportation while improving opportunities for jobs, education, housing, and transportation. Living in cities permits individuals and families to take advantage of the opportunities of proximity, diversity, and marketplace competition.

### **Challenges of Urbanization**

Population growth and rapid urbanization are combining to create huge challenges for Indian cities. According to McKinsey, the country's cities are expected to grow from 340 million people



in 2008 to a whopping 590 million in 2030. Meeting demand for urban services in these cities will require US\$ 1.1 trillion in capital investment over the next 20 years. Without the right design and planning, this massive urban growth could exacerbate existing problems of congestion, pollution, and traffic safety. Humans have created urban areas right since the ancient times. Urbanization, as we know it now, began with the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, and has only been on the rise ever since. Statistics tell us that half of the world's people already live in urban areas, with that number set to expand in the years to come. Our cities have been luring people for various reasons, the basic one being the hope of a better life. People are drawn to the cities for the comforts they offer, the opportunities they hold, and the sleek lifestyle they promise. As cities continue to beckon people from all nooks and corners of the globe, a pertinent question remain to be answered - are our cities crumbling under the pressure? Urbanization, or rather, unplanned urbanization has led to the creation of several problems. Cities in developing countries, in particular, are home to the neo-urban dwellers, and are seen to be bearing the maximum brunt of it all. What follows are a few negative consequences of unstructured urbanization.

- **Levels of Pollution**

Cities have been invariably blamed for their contribution to the disturbing levels of pollution. Densely populated areas, coupled with a scant regard for environmental laws add to the woes. The urban population's daily commute costs the planet hard, with public transport systems failing to deliver, or people simply choosing luxury over sensibility and using private cars, which add to the emission of toxic fumes. Traffic congestion is a perennial problem, with no feasible solution foreseeable in the near future. Huge cities create enormous amounts of waste, and the urban lifestyle includes creation of waste that is mostly non-biodegradable, thanks to the generous use of plastic wares. This leads to an unprecedented increase in the garbage that stays in our landfills, polluting the soil for years to come.

- **Population Explosion**

Countries experiencing a steady growth in population have their specific problems to deal with. With this population growth centered in and on the urban areas, the problems are further narrowed. The rapidly increasing number of arrivals to the cities is proving to be unmanageable to the authorities, owing to lack of resources and organizational skills. The rising demand for space pushes the property prices higher, simultaneously paving the way for the creation of slums. Living conditions here take a definite beating due to the absence of basic amenities like safe drinking water, clean toilets, and drainage systems.

- **High Cost of Living**

Living in a city does not come cheap, with people having to pay the added cost of transportation and taxes for regular commodities. It's not too hard to imagine a time when city dwellers will be asked to pay a tax on the oxygen they breathe. The swelling population makes every commodity pricey, and at the same time, leads to an influx of low-grade substitutes of food products, water, and even medical supplies. Costs of food, transportation, rents, and other necessities are perpetually on the rise, as their demand keeps exceeding the supply.

- **Economic Disparity**

While the cities are a haven for the opportunity seekers, the unfortunate reality is that they are not handed out equally. Cities are the best places to view examples of economic inequality, where the rich keep getting richer, with the poor remaining the way they are. Extreme affluence and acute poverty live right next to each other in the cities, albeit grudgingly. At some point, this makes way for rebellion. Opportunities, or rather, their limited nature, translate into unemployment. As the population spirals out of control, the disenchantment is bound to increase, resulting in a flare-up of sorts. If there's one thing we fail to understand, it is the fact that every city has its limits, and burdening it will only cause it to burst at the seams.

- **Increase in Crime Rates**

With the undue pressure that we're putting on our cities each day, it is going to be nothing short of a challenge for the governing bodies to manage these sprawling metropolitan areas. Deftly managing densely populated areas is next to impossible, which raises issues regarding civic duties; law and order, in particular. As the city life pulls in all sorts of people, and allows for all sorts of activities to flourish, criminals, too, find their share of opportunities here. Street crimes go on to become common as the authorities find it tough to patrol cities that are crowded beyond limits. As the safety concerns increase, it is ultimately the citizens who have to bear the consequences.

- **Future Real Estate Development**

As more and more people move into India's cities, these people will need safe places to live, work, and commute. There's already a projected shortage of 18.78 million households in India between 2012 and 2017. Real estate developers will inevitably aim to fill this gap, which means that they'll have a massive influence in shaping what India cities look like in the future. Will the private sector invest in developments that provide access to sustainable transport, or will they follow a business-as-usual path and perpetuate problems of urban sprawl, pollution, and unsafe roads.

- **Traffic Safety and Accessibility**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 10 percent of the world's road fatalities (130,000) occur in India alone. Traffic crashes occur every minute, and a life is lost every 3.7 minutes. Crashes have a significant negative impact on the nation's economy, costing the country the equivalent of 3 percent of its GDP between 1999 and 2000. These startling numbers mean that city leaders and other decision-makers must consider issues of safety not only on the road, but also in the surrounding environment. Safety and accessibility are key components of ensuring that cities become secure, sustainable places to live.

### **Urbanization and health**

It is common for half of a city's population to live in slums and illegal settlements where health conditions are awful. Infant and child mortality rates ten to twenty times what they should be. I think of squatter settlements I know where one child in five dies before their fifth birthday. The reason for this awful health is easy to see. Concentrate people, industries, motor vehicles and their wastes – and this produces disastrous health. Cholera, diarrheal diseases, air pollution deaths, deaths from traffic accidents.

### **Urbanization and social development**

Urban concentration supports a more direct engagement between government and citizens. Most of the best examples of more participatory, responsive and accountable governance in the last 30 years come from cities. In Mumbai, one of the most successful cities in Asia, around half the population live in slums or on pavements lacking provision for basic services. Living in very poor quality overcrowded dwellings. But this is beginning to change, through partnerships between government agencies and two federations: the National Slum Dwellers Federation and Mahila Milan (a federation of savings groups formed by women living in slums or on pavements). In most slums in Mumbai there are now community police stations where local police and slum residents work together. In many slums in Mumbai, there are now community-managed toilets and washing facilities that were built and are managed by resident committees.

### **Urbanization and global warming**

Cities are now being blamed for global warming. It is so common to hear the statement that cities are responsible for 75 or 80 percent of all greenhouse gases. But these figures are nonsense. There are two ways of allocating greenhouse gas emissions to nations or cities: If we consider where greenhouse gases are produced, drawing on the latest IPCC reports, the greenhouse gases emitted in rural areas or urban centers too small to be considered cities come to far more than 20 to 25 percent, if we take account of all the emissions they have from agriculture, deforestation, power plants, industries, motor vehicle use and non-electrical space heating of offices and

homes. Indeed, most large fossil-fuelled power stations and much heavy industry (including cement production and metal smelters) are in rural areas or small urban centers. Cities may be responsible for a higher proportion of greenhouse gas emissions, taking the consumption perspective. So it is the person or household that is consuming the food, the electricity, and the consumer goods that is allocated the greenhouse gases that went into their production, distribution and sale.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The second UN Conference on Human Settlements in 1996 came to the conclusion that the cities all over the world are facing problems due to urbanization. But how do the type and scale of problems differ between those in the developed and the developing world the initial problems faced by the developing countries are mostly due to demographic changes. The new migrants from rural areas are usually young males. The existing infrastructure of the city cannot usually cope with the influx of new migrants and this brings about social problems. Most of the cities in these countries suffer from chronic housing shortages. This causes a proliferation of slums and squatter settlements. Central slums are usually in old, sub-standard buildings, which have been subdivided into tiny, cramped flats. Most newcomers initially move here in search of work, but access to services is poor. There is a high incidence of crime, suicide, drugs and alcohol. These central areas are often nicknamed 'slums of despair'. 'Later, with more money and joined by the family, the early migrant may move to peripheral squatter settlements.

It may take many years for the settlements to be provided with adequate water and electricity, education and healthcare. Cities in the developed world have social problems too, though urbanization, population size, megacities, rural population, urban population, self-generated or endogenous urbanization, industrialization, modernization theory, dependency/world-system theory, rural-urban imbalance, the global urban hierarchy, global cities, urban localities, percentage the labor force in industry, urban hierarchy, sectoral inequality, rural to urban migration, urban primacy, growth and wealth distribution, over urbanization, under urbanization,

demographic natural increase, urbanization-environment relationship, job creation, informal sector, housing, spatial form, education, health.

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