Module 7

Urbanization and Development

Lecture 21: Urbanization in India

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INTRODUCTION

This module focuses on the growth of urbanization. It deals with the concept of urbanization, difference between urbanization and urbanism, level and trend of urbanization in India, causes of urbanization, relationship between urbanization and development, and future of urbanization in India

DEFINITION OF URBAN AREAS

There is no universal definition of urban areas. **Different countries define urban localities in terms of different factors such as size and density of population, amenities considered to be commonly available in urban areas, major economic activities of population, etc.** Also not all those countries which define urban areas in terms of the same factors use the same threshold values for distinguishing urban localities from rural localities. For example, among those countries which define urban areas in terms of minimum size of population, some countries define an area with a minimum population of 5,000 as urban while many countries define smaller places also as urban areas (say areas with a population of 2,000). This makes comparison between levels of urbanization between different countries as somewhat problematic.

Box 7.1 presents the census definition of urban areas that was used in Census of India, 2001. The box also defines urban agglomerations and cities. The definition shows that size is one major factor in defining urban areas but this is not the only factor. Density of population, being a seat of local administration and composition of male labour force are others. Thus not all urban areas are large. Some urban areas have a population of less than 5,000. **Badrinatinth, the famous pilgrimage place of Hindus has zero population at the time of census enumeration but it is defined as urban.** The urban areas which have a population above 100,000 are called cities or Class I cities.

URBANIZATION AND URBANISM

Urbanization does not imply **urbanism**. Urbanization refers to growth of urban population, in relation to rural population, but urbanism refers to presence of a distinction culture in urban areas. The term urbanism was coined by Louis Wirth (2009) to refer to ways of life in cities. Wirth published a classic essay on this theme "Urbanism as a Way of Life", in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1938. In this essay he focused on city life, minority group behaviour and mass media. His research was concerned with how Jewish immigrants adjusted to life in urban America, as well as the distinct social processes of city life. He applied the concepts and theories of sociology to study of city life. For those who followed Wirth's ideas, the way of life of urban areas has been a more important subject of study than urbanization. Looked at from this perspective, a country may have high degree of urbanization but in terms of culture its urban areas may not be very different from the rural areas. Alternatively, urbanism need to be defined varyingly in the context of different countries. Since the history and processes of growth of cities in the developing countries are markedly different from those of the developed countries it is natural that the urban areas in the two world regions acquire different characters, or different styles of urbanism.

In general, however, in studies of population processes a distinction is made between urban and rural areas. All social and demographic characteristics of population vary according to urban-rural residence variable. Urban areas are normally marked by:

- Higher literacy, educational achievements and vocational education
- Higher standard of living, higher aspirations and more amenities and services
- Higher age of marriage
- Lower ideal family size, greater use of family planning methods and lower fertility
- Better health infrastructure leading to lower mortality and fertility rates
- Higher autonomy and empowerment of women
- Lower impact of religiosity and supernatural beliefs
- Greater impact of globalization, individualization and secularization

Applying the Wirth's framework of urbanism, some demographers call the urban areas of India as **rurban**, i.e., showing the characteristics of both urban and rural areas. Thus urban population of India lives in urban areas but shows the characteristics of rural areas. For other sociologists, however, rurbanism is not bad. It may be seen as a positive concept which shows an emerging integration of rural and urban communities with respect to principles and practices governing land use, energy, transportation, governance, and all aspects of economic, ecological, and social development. Indiresan (2008) argues that rurbanisation is a solution to India's development problems.

MEASUREMENTS OF URBANIZATION

Urbanization is measured in terms of level (or sometimes called degree) of urbanization and speed of urbanization. Level of urbanization is defined as the percentage of total population of an area that is living in urban localities. All countries classify localities into urban and rural and collect data on their population. Thus

$$\text{Level of urbanization} = (\text{Urban population}/\text{Total population})*100$$

Thus if the level of urbanization of a country is 32 percent it implies that out of 100 persons in that country 32 are living in localities classified as urban (i.e., towns and cities). It may be stressed that the level of urbanization is dependent on the definition of urban and rural areas; change in the definition of urban localities may produce significant change in level of urbanization.

Speed of urbanization during a given period is defined as percentage change (per year) in the level of urbanization. Thus the speed of urbanization during 1991-2001 may be calculated as follows:

Speed of urbanization, 1991-2001 = ((Difference in the levels of urbanization during 1991-2001)/ Level of urbanization in 1991)*100/10

BOX 7.1: URBAN AND RURAL AREAS IN INDIAN CENSUS

In the Census of India 2001, the definition of urban area adopted is as follows: (a) All statutory places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee, etc. (b) A place satisfying the following three criteria simultaneously:

i) a minimum population of 5,000;
ii) at least 75 per cent of male working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits; and
iii) a density of population of at least 400 per sq. km. (1,000 per sq. mile).

For identification of places which would qualify to be classified as 'urban' all villages, which, as per the 1991 Census had a population of 4,000 and above, a population density of 400 persons per sq. km. and having at least 75 per cent of male working population engaged in non-agricultural activity were considered. To work out the proportion of male working population referred to above against b)(ii), the data relating to main workers were taken into account.

An Urban Agglomeration is a continuous urban spread constituting a town and its adjoining urban outgrowths (OGs) or two or more physically contiguous towns together and any adjoining urban outgrowths of such towns. Examples of OGs are railway colonies, university campuses, port areas, etc., that may come up near a city or statutory town outside its statutory limits but within the revenue limits of a village or villages contiguous to the town or city. Each such individual area by itself may not satisfy the minimum population limit to qualify it to be treated as an independent urban unit but may deserve to be clubbed with the town as a continuous urban spread.

For the purpose of delineation of Urban Agglomerations during Census of India 2001, following criteria are taken as pre-requisites: (a) The core town or at least one of the constituent towns of an urban agglomeration should necessarily be a statutory town; and (b) The total population of all the constituents (i.e. towns and outgrowths) of an Urban Agglomeration should not be less than 20,000 (as per the 1991 Census). With these two basic criteria having been met, the following are the possible different situations in which Urban Agglomerations would be constituted: (i) a city or town with one or more contiguous outgrowths; (ii) two or more adjoining towns with their outgrowths; and (iii) a city and one or more adjoining towns with their outgrowths all of which form a continuous spread.

City
Towns with population of 1,00,000 and above are called cities.

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Since level of urbanization can vary from zero to 100 only as the level of urbanization increases the potential to urbanize faster decreases. According to one United Nations study, urbanization follows a logistic growth model. This means that in the beginning when the total population lives in rural areas, urbanization level increases at a slower pace but as the level of urbanization rises the rate of urbanization also rises. A point comes when the population observes highest speed of urbanization. Beyond this point, although the level of urbanization may continue to rise further but the speed of urbanization starts decreasing.

At some level below 100 percent urbanization stops increasing further. As the level of urbanization increases a similar amount of rural-to-urban migration would result in smaller speed of urbanization. One cannot expect a highly urbanized country with a level of urbanization above 80 percent to be urbanizing at the same speed as a lowly urbanized country with a level of urbanization at 5-10 percent.

URBANIZATION IN INDIA

Table 7.1 shows the levels and trends of urbanization in India in the twentieth century. It shows that in the beginning of the last century only 10.84 percent population of India was living in urban areas. There is no doubt that there were some world famous religious, and political and educational cities in all parts of the country but an overwhelming majority of population was living in rural areas. Thus India lived in its villages. Till 1931 the speed of urbanization was rather small. As a matter of fact during 1901 to 1911 the level of urbanization decreased. The major improvement in urbanization took place during 1931-1951 and 1971 to 1981. The period 1931-1951 was politically turbulent and millions of people moved cross-border after the partition of the county into India and Pakistan. After that the speed of urbanization has been slower and erratic (partly due to definitional changes). The last census (in 2001) showed that 27.81 percent of India's population was living in urban areas and the speed of urbanization is 0.82 percent per year.

Census data have also shown that Goa State has the highest proportion of urban population (49.76 percent), Himachal Pradesh has the lowest (9.30 percent). Among the Union territories Delhi has the highest proportion of urban population (93.18), and Dadra & Nagar Haveli the lowest (22.89).

The towns and cities are usually divided into five classes: Class I Cities with population above 100,000; Class II Towns with population 50,000-100,000; Class III Towns with population 20,000-50,000; Class IV Towns with population 10,000-20,000; and Class V Towns with population 5,000-10,000. More than half of India's urban population lives in Class I cities, and nearly one third in Class II or Class III towns. The share of towns with population less than 20,000 is rather small (Registrar General India, 2009).

TABLE 7.1: LEVEL AND TREND OF URBANIZATION IN INDIA, 1901-2001

Year	Total	Rural	Urban	Level of urbanization	Speed (trend) of urbanization
1901	238,396,327	212,544,454	25,851,873	10.84	-
1911	252,093,390	226,151,757	25,941,633	10.29	-0.51
1921	251,321,213	223,235,043	28,086,170	11.18	0.86
1931	278,977,238	245,521,249	33,455,989	11.99	0.72
1941	318,660,580	274,507,283	44,153,297	13.86	1.56
1951	361,088,090	298,644,381	62,443,709	17.29	2.47
1961	439,234,771	360,298,168	78,936,603	17.97	0.39
1971	548,159,652	439,045,675	109,113,977	19.91	1.08
1981	683,329,097	523,866,550	159,462,547	23.34	1.72
1991	846,302,688	628,691,676	217,611,012	25.71	1.02
2001	1,028,737,436	742,490,639	286,119,689	27.81	0.82

THREE MILLION PLUS CITIES

There are about 4,000 cities and towns in India. About 300 cities have population over 1,00,000. Among them seven cities have population more than 3 million (Indiamart.com, 2009). According to U.S. Census Bureau Mumbai ranks third in the world after Tokyo and Mexico. Kolkata 9th and Delhi 14th. The names and populations of 3 million plus cities are given in Table 7.2.

TABLE 7.2: CITIES IN INDIA WITH THREE MILLION PLUS POPULATION

City	Population in 1991	Population in 2001
Greater Mumbai (Bombay)	9,925,891	11,914,398
Delhi	7,206,704	9,817,439
Kolkata (Calcutta)	4,399,819	4,580,544
Bangalore	2,660,088	4,292,223
Chennai (Madras)	3,841,396	4,216,268
Ahmedabad	2,876,710	3,515,361
Hyderabad	2,964,638	3,449,878