



Original Article

IMPACT OF URBANIZATION ON INDIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract:

Urbanization is the process of the growth of the cities and the movement of more people from rural areas to urban areas. This is the global phenomenon which started as the aftermath of industrialization. In India it has become common since many decades. There are many reasons behind this movement of people from rural areas to urban areas. In this article I am bringing forth the causes and effects of urbanization on Indian society. Urbanization affects not only family structure but also intra and inter-family relations, as well as the functions the family performs. The rapid pace of urbanization in India has brought about significant changes in the country's social, economic, and environmental landscape. This paper explores the implications of urbanization in India, focusing on its economic, social, environmental, cultural, infrastructure, political, health, and gender implications. Urbanization has had a significant impact on India, bringing about economic benefits such as job creation and increased trade and commerce, but also leading to inequality and poverty, particularly among the urban poor. It has also led to increased pollution and the destruction of natural habitats, as well as the displacement of traditional communities and cultures. Additionally, urbanization has put a strain on infrastructure and resources, leading to overcrowding, traffic congestion, and pollution, as well as the emergence of new political actors and increased political corruption. Finally, urbanization has led to changes in the roles and status of women in Indian society, with both positive and negative implications. To address these issues, it is important for policymakers to focus on gender-sensitive urban development, including the provision of affordable housing, improved sanitation facilities, and waste management systems, as well as policies to address violence against women and discrimination.

Keywords: Global Phenomenon, Rural Area, Gender Implications, Traditional Communities, Discriminations, Acceleration, Infrastructure, Employment Opportunities etc.

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Introduction:

Urbanization, a phenomenon marked by the movement of populations from rural to urban areas, has significantly shaped the socio-economic landscape of India. Urbanization in India has its roots in the colonial era, when cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai emerged as trade hubs. However, the post-independence period marked a significant acceleration in urbanization due to industrialization, economic reforms, and liberalization. According to the 2011 Census of India, the urban population constituted 31.16% of the total population, a figure that is expected to rise to 40% by 2030.

The migration from rural areas to cities is driven by various push and pull factors. Push factors include lack of employment opportunities, agricultural distress, and inadequate infrastructure in rural areas. Pull factors, on the other hand, include better job prospects, higher wages, improved living standards, and access to education and healthcare in urban areas.

Patterns of Migration:

Migration in India can be classified into several types:

- **Seasonal Migration:** Predominantly seen in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Odisha, where agricultural workers migrate to urban areas during the non-harvest season to find employment in construction and other informal sectors.

- **Permanent Migration:** Involves entire families moving to cities with the intention of settling permanently. This is more common among skilled workers and professionals.
- **Distress Migration:** Often triggered by natural disasters, environmental degradation, or socio-political conflicts, forcing people to relocate to urban areas as a last resort.

Positive Effects of Urbanisation:

1. Economic Growth of Urbanization:

1. **Economic Engines:** Cities are often referred to as the engines of economic growth. They attract businesses, industries, and investments, creating job opportunities and boosting the economy. For example, New York City, Tokyo, and London are economic powerhouses that contribute significantly to their respective national economies.
2. **Innovation Hubs:** Urban areas foster innovation and entrepreneurship. Silicon Valley, located in the San Francisco Bay Area, is a prime example. It's home to many of the world's largest high-tech corporations and thousands of startup companies.

2. Better Access to Services:

1. **Healthcare:** Urban residents generally have better access to healthcare facilities compared to those in rural areas. This access leads to improved health outcomes and longer life expectancy. For instance, studies show



that urban children are more likely to receive vaccinations and essential medical care than their rural counterparts.

2. **Education:** Cities offer more educational opportunities, from primary schools to universities. The availability of diverse educational institutions attracts students from all over, fostering a more educated and skilled workforce.

3. Improved Infrastructure:

1. **Transportation:** Urbanisation leads to the development of robust transportation networks, including public transit systems like buses, subways, and trains. This infrastructure facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods.
2. **Utilities:** Cities are more likely to have reliable utilities such as electricity, water supply, and internet connectivity. These amenities improve the quality of life and support economic activities.

4. Social and Cultural Benefits:

1. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Cities are melting pots of cultures, attracting people from various backgrounds. This diversity enriches the social fabric and fosters a culture of tolerance and inclusion.
2. **Entertainment and Leisure:** Urban areas offer a wide range of recreational activities, including theatres, museums, parks, and sports facilities. This abundance of options enhances the overall quality of life for residents.

Negative Effects of Urbanisation:

1. Environmental Degradation:

1. **Pollution:** Urbanisation often leads to increased pollution levels. Cities like Beijing and Delhi struggle with severe air pollution, which poses serious health risks. Industrial activities, vehicle emissions, and construction contribute to this problem.
2. **Habitat Loss:** The expansion of urban areas leads to the destruction of natural habitats, threatening biodiversity. Research by Zhu et al. (2020) in Hangzhou, China, showed a significant decrease in habitat quality due to rapid urbanisation.

2. Social Challenges:

1. **Inequality:** Urbanisation can exacerbate social inequality. While cities offer numerous opportunities, they also have stark contrasts between affluent areas and impoverished neighbourhoods. Slums and informal settlements are common in rapidly growing cities.
2. **Overcrowding:** High population densities can lead to overcrowding, which affects living conditions and access to services. For instance, Mumbai, India, faces significant challenges with overcrowded housing and public transportation.

3. Economic Disparities:

1. **Unemployment:** Although cities create jobs, they can also face high unemployment rates, particularly among unskilled workers. The mismatch between the skills of the workforce and available job



opportunities can lead to economic disparities.

2. **High Cost of Living:** Urban areas often have a higher cost of living, making it difficult for low-income residents to afford housing, food, and other essentials. Cities like San Francisco and London are known for their exorbitant housing costs.

4. Health Issues:

1. **Stress and Mental Health:** The fast-paced urban lifestyle can increase stress levels and negatively impact mental health. Studies have shown that urban residents are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression compared to those in rural areas.
2. **Disease Spread:** High population density facilitates the rapid spread of infectious diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how quickly diseases can spread in urban settings, necessitating robust public health measures.

Balancing the Effects of Urbanisation:

Urbanisation is inevitable, and its effects can be both positive and negative. To maximise the benefits and mitigate the downsides, comprehensive urban planning and effective governance are essential. Here are some strategies to achieve balanced urbanisation:

1. Sustainable Urban Planning:

1. **Green Spaces:** Incorporating green spaces like parks and community gardens into urban planning can help mitigate environmental degradation and improve residents' quality of life.

For example, Singapore's extensive network of green spaces contributes to its reputation as a "Garden City."

2. **Smart Growth:** Adopting smart growth principles, such as mixed-use development and transit-oriented development, can reduce urban sprawl and promote efficient land use.

2. Environmental Protection:

1. **Pollution Control:** Implementing strict regulations to control industrial emissions and promote clean energy can reduce pollution. Cities like Copenhagen have made significant strides in reducing carbon emissions through renewable energy initiatives.
2. **Habitat Conservation:** Protecting natural habitats and biodiversity through conservation areas and sustainable development practices is crucial. The research by Wu et al. (2021) in the Pearl River Delta, China, highlights the positive impact of ecological civilisation policies on habitat quality.

3. Social Equity and Inclusion:

1. **Affordable Housing:** Developing affordable housing projects and implementing policies to prevent gentrification can ensure that all residents have access to safe and affordable housing.
2. **Inclusive Services:** Ensuring that essential services like healthcare and education are accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status, can promote social equity.



4. Economic Development:

1. **Job Creation:** Fostering diverse economic opportunities and supporting small and medium enterprises can create jobs and reduce unemployment.
2. **Skill Development:** Investing in education and vocational training programs can help bridge the skills gap and ensure that the workforce is equipped to meet the demands of the job market.

5. Public Health and Safety:

1. **Healthcare Access:** Strengthening healthcare infrastructure and ensuring that public health services are accessible to all can improve health outcomes. Cities like Tokyo have robust healthcare systems that cater to their large populations.
2. **Mental Health Support:** Providing mental health services and promoting work-life balance can help address stress and mental health issues in urban settings.

6. Governance and Participation:

1. **Transparent Governance:** Promoting transparency and accountability in governance can reduce corruption and improve service delivery.
2. **Community Engagement:** Involving residents in the planning and decision-making processes can ensure that urban development meets the needs of the community. Habitat II emphasised the importance of community participation and networks of trust in solving urban problems.

Conclusion:

Urbanisation is a complex process with both positive and negative effects. It drives economic growth and offers better access to services but also poses significant environmental and social challenges. By adopting sustainable urban planning, protecting the environment, promoting social equity, fostering economic development, and ensuring effective governance, cities can harness the benefits of urbanisation while mitigating its downsides. The future of urbanisation depends on our ability to create cities that are livable, inclusive, and sustainable for all.

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