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Levels of Urbanization in India: A Geographical Analysis

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Abstract

In the present context highest rates of economic growth are being witnessed in Asian countries, especially in China and India. India and China comprise the largest rural populations, however, still the degree of urbanization is found to be slower as compared to the western world. In last and present centaury a large number of cities around all over world are witnessing high rates of industrial growth, economic growth and the growth in their urban population. At present, India is one of the world's largest emerging economies in world. Urbanization is often considered as an index of transformation of a traditional rural society to modern industrial one. It is a progressive concentration of population in urban centres of a region (Datta, 2006). In India, Urbanization process has been relatively slow as compared to many other developing countries. In 1901, the urban population of India was only 10.84 percent of the total population. It was increased to 17.29 percent in 1951 and further to 31.16 percent in 2011. India is at acceleration stage of the process of urbanization in the last two or three decades. According to Census of India, 2011, Goa stands for highly urbanized state with an urban population of 62.1 percent. The numbers of million plus cities have increased from 9 in 1951 to 23 in 1991 and to 53 in 2011 due to rapid industrialization and rural to urban migration. Share of Metropolitan cities population has been surged up increased 18.9 percent in 1951 to 42.3 percent in 2011. The monitoring of urbanization process playing a dominant role for urban planners, urban local bodies, managers, environmentalists, governmental and non-governmental organizations for implementing various policies in order to make the proper optimization of the use of natural resources and accommodate development at the same time minimizing its harmful impact on the environment.

***Key Words**: Urbanization, Industrialization, Metropolitan*

Introduction:

Urbanization is the result of growth in secondary and tertiary activities like industrialization, manufacturing, trade and services etc. on the one hand, and threaten the growth of agricultural areas on the other. Urbanization refers to the migration of people from villages to the town/city where economic activities revolve around non-agricultural activities such as trade, manufacturing industry and management. It is a phenomenon which is closely associated with industrial development and economic development. Rate of urban growth in India was slower before 20th century but it has become faster during the later decades of the 20th century. In India regional disparities can be observed in urban growth and development and can be seen all over the country which needs to be redressed. In the present scenario, highest rate of economic growth is being witnessed in Asian countries. India and China have the largest rural populations in the world as compared to the urban population across other developed countries in the world. In the beginning of the 21st century, a large number of urban centers are witnessing high rates of economic growth coupled with growth in urban population. At present, India is among the largest emerging economies in terms of area, population growth and size of GDP in the world; but it still faces many challenges on several fronts. There is a need to break the historically determined structures of social and economic privilege, and design provisions which grant equal opportunities to all citizens.

According to the United Nations project 2011, India accounted for 11 percent of the world's total urban population and it is expected to be 15 percent by the year 2030. Over the last six-seven decades since independence, India's population increased manifold from 350 million in 1947 to 1210 million in the year 2011. During the same period, the urban population has also increased from 60 million to 377 million. In India, the rate of urbanization is defined as percent population residing in urban areas. The urban population has increased from 10.84% in 1901 to 17.29% in 1951 and further to 31.16% in 2011 Census. The present paper attempts to understand the urbanization process, and trends and patterns based on the census data during 1901-2011 in India. It also discusses about regional variations in the urban population. The monitoring of urbanization process plays a dominant role for urban planners, urban local bodies, city managers, environmentalists, governmental and non-governmental organizations for implementing various

policies. The rationale is optimum use of natural resources, and accommodate development in a way that minimizes its harmful impact on the environment.

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the present study are:

- To study the spatio-temporal process of urbanization in India
- To analyze the degree or level of urbanization in India.

Data Base and Research Methodology:

The present paper is a systematic analysis based on secondary data. Secondary data was collected from government and semi-government publications. Required data and comprehensive information as well as available published material related to urbanization in the spatio-temporal context was collected from the Census of India, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA). The data collected from the secondary sources have been organized, moderated, tabulated, analyzed and portrayed with suitable cartographic and statistical techniques. The following statistical technique has been used in the present study:

Degree of urbanization is defined as comparative number of people who reside in urban areas.

Rural percentage = (R/P)*100

Urban percentage = (U/P)*100

Urban to Rural percentage = (U/R)*100

These are used to estimate the degree of urbanization.

Urbanization Defined:

In India, Urbanization process has been relatively slower during the last century as compared to the other developing countries in the world. In India, the definition of "Urban" remained more or less the same during the period of 1901-1951. However, in the decade of 1961, several changes were made, and the definition of 'Town' reframed for the 1961 Census was much more rigorous and further this new definition was followed all over country uniformly. Since 1981

Census, while calculating the proportion of workers in non- agricultural activities, the workers in occupation of fishing, livestock, hunting, planting and orchards have been incorporated as a component of 'agricultural workers' whereas such workers were included in the category of non-agricultural worker at the time of 1961 and 1971 Censuses. The Census of India recognizes all those settlements as 'Urban' which:

- Either have a statutory status like Municipal Committee/Corporation/Notified Area Committee/Cantonment Board, Estate Office, etc. or fulfill all the following three conditions simultaneously:
  - i) A population of more than 5000;
  - ii) More than 75 percent of the male working population is engaged in non-agricultural activities; and
  - iii) Density of population is more than 400 persons per square kilometer (Bhagat R.B., 2011).

Volume and Trend of Urbanization in India:

In the 20th century, urbanization process was very slow but in the 21st century the pace has increased. Total population has increased from 238.39 million in 1901 to 1210.57 million in 2011 Census whereas, number of population living in urban areas has also increased from 25.85 million in 1901 to 377.1 million in 2011 (Table 1). The number of urban agglomeration/town has also increased from 1827 in 1901, to 2843 in 1951. and to 7935 in 2011. The proportion of urban population in total population was only 10.84 percent in 1901and now in 2011 it is 31.16 percent. This whole scenario reflects the development of urbanization process in India. India is at acceleration stage of the process of urbanization.

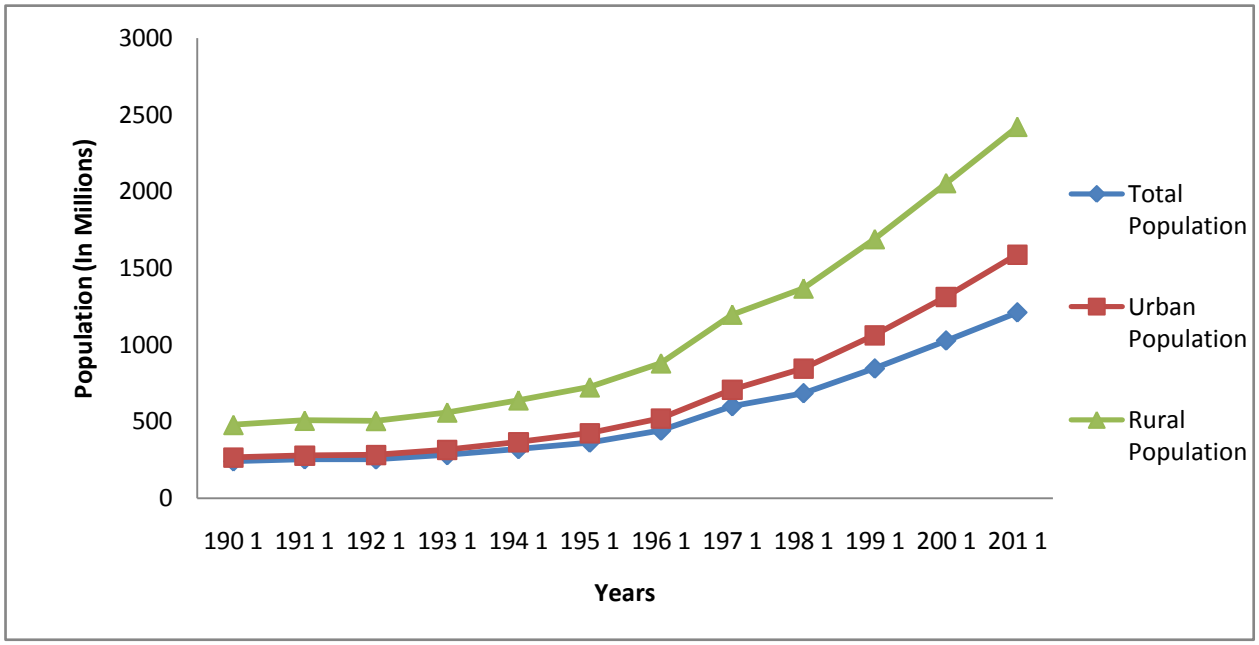
Table 1: Population of India by Residence 1901-2011

Census Years	Number of Urban agglomeration/town	Total Population (In Million)	Urban Population (In Million)	Rural Population (In Million)	Urban Population in %

1901	1827	238.38	25.84	212.53	10.83
1911	1825	252.08	25.95	226.14	10.28
1921	1949	251.33	28.07	223.24	11.19
1931	2072	278.98	33.44	245.53	11.98
1941	2250	318.65	44.16	274.51	13.87
1951	2843	361.09	62.43	298.63	17.28
1961	2363	439.24	78.94	360.28	17.98
1971	2590	598.16	109.12	489.05	19.92
1981	3378	683.33	159.47	523.87	23.34
1991	3768	844.33	217.16	627.15	25.73
2001	5161	1027.03	285.36	741.67	27.77
2011	7935	1210.56	377.11	833.47	31.16

Source: Census of India, various years

Figure 1: Growth and Trends of Urbanization in India (1901-2011)



Source: Census of India, various years

Figure 1 reveals the growth and trends of urbanization in India. The growth rate of urban population increased suddenly during 1941-1951 due to the post-independence events, and due to reclassification of erstwhile rural settlements as urban areas. In the post 1951 period, the growth has seen variations and touched 46 percent mark during 1971-1981 and again reached 41 percent during 1991-2001. However, during the last decade the growth of urbanization seems to have slowed down a little. Due to industrialization, infrastructural development and expansion of social and economic services in the urban areas not only raised their growth potentiality but also their attractiveness, thus resulting in a greater migration from rural area to urban area. However, the increase also includes the effect of reclassification of city boundaries as well as conversion of rural areas into urban areas. In fact, the absolute increase in urban population during 1991-2001 and 2001-2011 has been higher than the urban population in 1951 itself.

Urbanization in Indian States:

The process of urbanization primarily depends on various attributes liked social, economic, historical and political factors across various regions. There has been a considerable variation among Indian states in terms of rates of urbanization during 2001-2011. It has been found that India displays one of the lowest urbanization rates as compared to other developing countries in the world. The following Map (Figure 2) shows the pattern of urbanization in India. Mizoram and Goa (50 percent and above) states are among top urbanized states in India followed by Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Kerala and Maharashtra that lie in high category (35-50 percent) whereas, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and West Bengal fall into the medium category of urbanization (15-35 percent). States like, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar and Assam have less than 15 percent of urban population in India. The smaller states and union territories record a significant urbanization level whereas Delhi ranks on top of the list, as 97.5 percent of the Delhi population is urban. Goa and Mizoram consist of more than 50 percent urban population out of their total population. On the contrary, Himachal Pradesh reports 10 per cent of its population in urban areas while states like Odisha, Assam, Bihar have 10 per cent to 20 per cent of urban population.

Moreover, 13 states registered higher ratio than all India urbanization ratios of 31.16 per cent and the remaining 16 states report less than it. The proportion of urban population in most of the states was found to be increased during 2001 and 2011, except a few states like Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh where percentage of urban population in 2011 census had not much increased as compare to 2001 census (Table 3). During the decade of 2001-2011 some of the Indian states like Goa, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Chandigarh, Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu among the Union Territories have displayed more than 5 percent points increase as compare to 2001 census. It has been observed earlier that urbanization process/pattern broadly follows the infrastructural development and economic growth of the states, and is influenced by the presence of one or more fast growing cities in the vicinity. A considerable gain noticed in the urban population is due to rural-urban classification and rural-to-urban migration. A huge number of new towns have

emerged during the last decade, contributing significantly to the speeding up of urbanization process.

Urbanization Pattern in Indian States

Category	**Urbanization Rate**	**States**
Very High	50 Above	Mizoram, Goa
High	35-50	Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra
Medium	15-35	Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Orissa, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal West Bengal
Low	Below 15	Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Assam

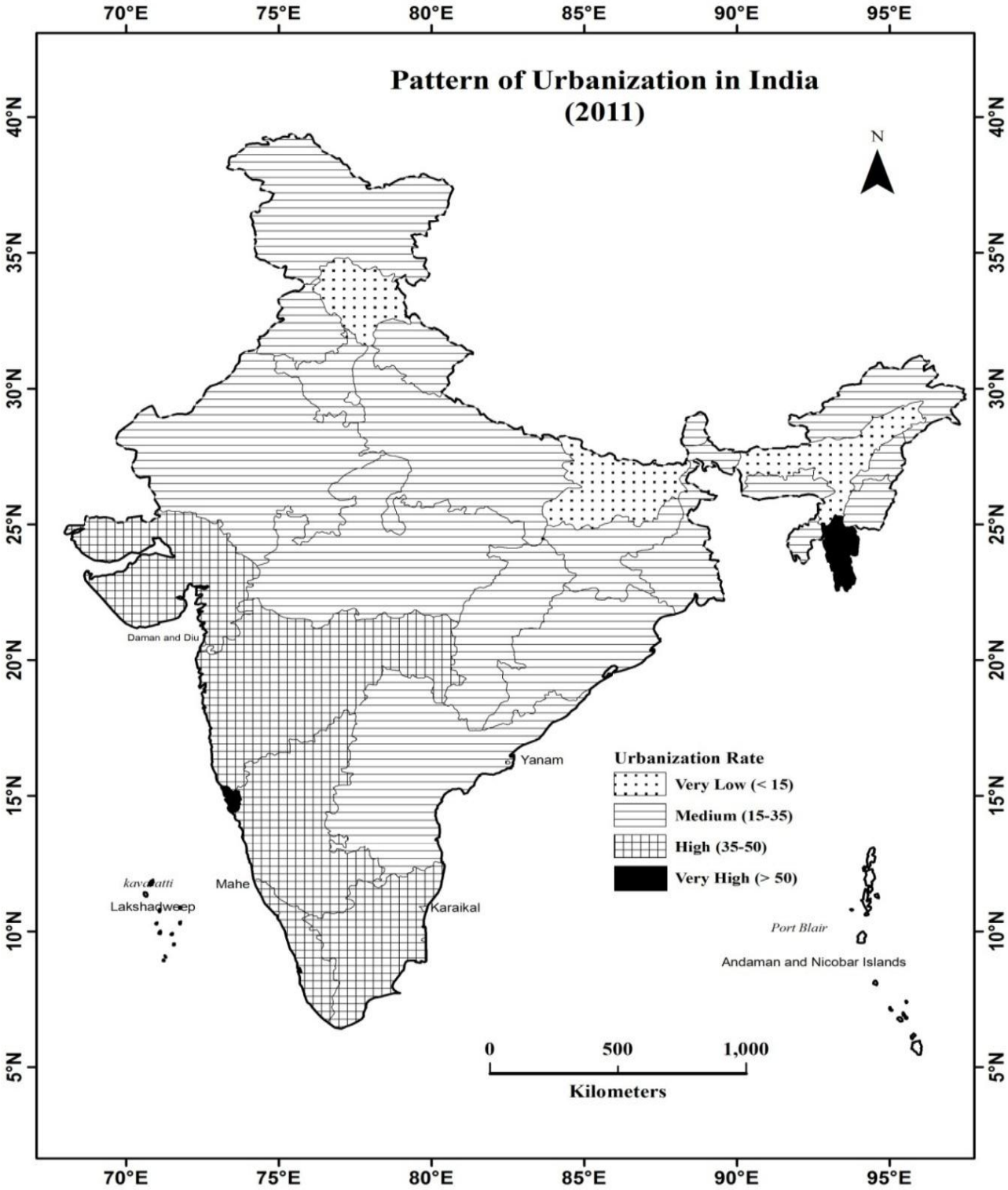

Pattern of Urbanization in India
(2011)
N
70°E
75°E
80°E
85°E
90°E
95°E
40°N
35°N
30°N
25°N
20°N
15°N
10°N
5°N
Daman and Diu
Yanam
Mahe
Karaikal
Lakshadweep
Port Blair
Andaman and Nicobar Islands
Urbanization Rate
Very Low (< 15)
Medium (15-35)
High (35-50)
Very High (> 50)
0
500
1,000
Kilometers

Figure 2

Table 3: Levels and Trend of Urbanization of Different States/UT 1971-2011

States	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	Change from 1971-2011
Karnataka	24.31	28.91	30.91	33.98	38.57	14.26
Andhra Pradesh	19.31	23.25	26.84	27.08	33.49	14.18
Arunachal Pradesh	3.7	6.32	12.21	20.41	22.67	18.97
Assam	NA	9.88	11.08	12.72	14.08	4.2
Bihar	10	12.46	13.17	10.47	11.3	1.3
Chhattisgarh	NA	NA	NA	20.08	23.24	3.16
Jammu & Kashmir	NA	21.05	23.83	24.88	27.21	6.16
Goa	26.45	32.45	41.03	49.78	62.16	35.74
Gujarat	28.09	31.09	34.41	37.36	42.57	14.50
Haryana	17.67	21.97	24.78	29	24.24	6.58
Himachal Pradesh	6.98	7.72	8.70	9.78	10.05	3.06
Jharkhand	NA	NA	NA	22.26	24.05	1.81
Kerala	16.24	18.77	26.45	25.96	47.71	31.47
Madhya Pradesh	16.28	20.32	23.22	26.68	27.62	11.35
Maharashtra	31.16	35.02	38.72	42.40	45.22	14.07
Manipur	13.18	26.45	27.68	23.87	20.20	7.03
Meghalaya	14.56	18.02	18.68	19.62	20.07	5.54
Mizoram	11.37	25.18	46.21	49.50	51.52	40.16

Nagaland	9.96	15.55	17.27	17.75	28.96	19.03
Orissa	8.42	11.83	13.42	14.96	16.67	8.28
Punjab	23.72	27.71	29.73	33.94	37.48	13.77
Rajasthan	17.62	20.94	22.87	23.37	24.88	7.25
Sikkim	9.36	16.24	9.13	11.10	24.96	15.60
Tamil Nadu	30.25	32.99	34.20	43.87	48.46	18.18
Tripura	10.44	10.97	15.27	17.03	26.17	15.76
Uttar Pradesh	14.01	18.02	19.88	20.77	22.29	8.25
Uttaranchal	NA	NA	NA	25.58	30.56	4.97
West Bengal	24.74	26.48	27.38	28.04	31.88	7.15
Union Territories						
Delhi	89.7	92.84	89.93	93.01	97.5	7.8
Andaman &Nicobar Islands	22.78	26.37	26.80	32.66	35.66	12.90
Chandigarh	90.56	93.60	89.68	89.77	97.24	6.70
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	NA	6.66	8.46	22.88	46.61	39.96
Daman & Diu	NA	NA	46.86	36.26	75.16	28.3
Lakshadweep	NA	46.31	56.29	44.47	78.08	31.77
Pondicherry	42.04	52.32	64.05	66.57	68.31	26.27
All India	20.22	23.73	25.72	27.78	31.16	10.94

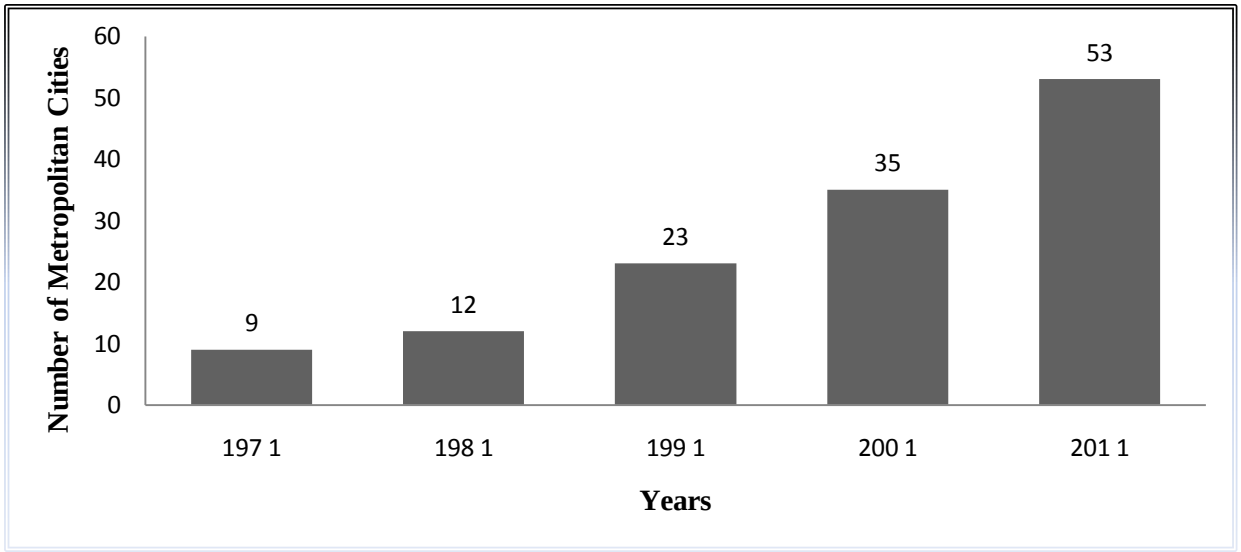
Source: Census of India (2011)

Growth of Cities in India:

According to the latest Census in 2011 there were 7,935 towns in the country. The number of towns registering a positive growth rate have jumped from 5,161 to 7,935 between 2001 and 2011; a net addition of 2,774 towns. A noticeable tendency of urban population growth in India is the increasing area of the large sized cities. Many of these towns are part of UAs and the rest

are independent towns. The number of metropolitan cities (million-plus) has grown sharply, from 35 to 53 during 2001-2011; out of which eight are 5 million plus cities. These cities account for 42.6 percent of the total urban population, up from 37.8 percent in 2001.

Figure 3: Growth of Million Plus Cities of India



Source: Census of India, various years

Figure 3 depicts that the number of metro cities with million plus population has increased from a mere 9 in 1971 to 53 in 2011. Thus the total number of metro cities witnessed an increase of more than five time from 9 to 53 from 1971 to 2011. Especially, the percentage of urban population residing in these cities has also grown from 27.7 percent in 1981 to 42.5 percent in 2011. Some of the towns/cities were historically famous as marketing zones, trade centers and educational hub, for the surrounding rural settlement in the region. Small sized towns in India have also grown up from 33,624 in 1961 to about 61,159 in 2011 Census. Class-I cities had 70.2 percent of the total urban population in 2011 Census; it was 68.6 percent in 2001 census. In fact, the growth of population has been the highest in Class-I cities during the last decade. It, thus, appears that much of India's urban growth has been chaotic and found various discrepancies between the demand and supply of infrastructure. Furthermore, need for services have increased

upto such an extent that demands a greater attention by the policy makers. It also raises serious questions about our ability to govern and administer the cities. It has been observed from the above analysis that the present trend towards the urban population growth in India is the result of natural growth, migration as well as reclassification of residential areas.

Conclusion:

Urban areas have been emerging as economic growth drivers for most of the countries; more particularly after the rapid pace of globalization. India too is not an exception and it has also witnessed a sharp rise in urbanization. At present, India is developing economy with the low level of urbanization, less than even the average world urbanization. Urbanization process is not the result of migration only, but also a product of population explosion due to natural increase. The urban population in India has grown from 286 million in 2001 to 377 million in 2011, an increase of 91 million, which is larger than the rural population's increase of 90.5 million for the first time after independence. This huge increase in the urban population is followed by a rural-urban reclassification. An enormous number of new towns emerged during the last decade of 2001-2011, which contributed prominently to the urbanization. This population pressure can be seen in poor urban infrastructure and civic amenities, including reproductive and child health services in urban areas. Urbanization within country is found to be very unbalanced. Western and Southern part of India is more urbanized as compared to the extreme parts of Eastern and Northern India, which comprise the least degree of urbanization in the country. It is necessary that the much pronounced regional disparities in the development of urban areas should be brought down.

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