Indian Urbanization under Globalization; Development or Delusion!

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Abstract

Urbanization is one of the indicators of development. Developing economies strain itself to industrialize and urbanize their economies. India historically was the cradle of urbanization. The cities, Harappa and Mohenzdaro were known for its organized, standard and structural town planning and its architectural style, beauty and excellence. But after Indus valley civilization had an abrupt end, India lived in her villages. As per 2011 census, India has 6.41 lakh inhabitant villages. After India embraced globalization as its new economic Dharma in 1991, urbanization is gaining momentum. Since 1991, urbanization has raised enormously adding 160 million in 20 years, which increased to 31.16% by 2011. In another 20 years, Urbanization is expected to add another 250 million to its existing 377 million, taking the urban population to over 627 million.

In reality, there is hardly anything called as Urban Planning in India. The Urban Ministry, Urban Planning department miserably failed to foresee the growth and plan for the future urban growth. Urban areas in India hence grew in haphazard and unscientific manner without proper planning. But population grew, Vehicles too. The net result is that majority of Indian cities are already choking under its own weight. Lack of urban infrastructure has lead to roads which is good for traffic jams and congestion. There is acute shortage of housing, water, power, sanitation, public transportation facilities, inadequate playgrounds and recreational facilities. But the adequacy is more in growth of multiple problems like waste management, provision of management of services, reducing green cover, extreme micro climates.

People, private and Government should equally participate to make our urban areas the place of worth living. If the socially and economically weaker sections are also part of inclusive growth of urbanization, then a sustainable faster inclusive urbanization is definitely possible. It will also in true sense, make the urbanization as one of the indicator of development and not a delusion
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Introduction

Urbanization is one of the indicators of development. Developing economies strain itself to industrialize and urbanize their economies. India historically was the cradle of urbanization. The cities, Harappa and Mohenzdaro were known for its organized, standard and structural town planning and its architectural style, beauty and excellence. But after Indus valley civilization had an abrupt end, India lived in her villages (Keshava.SR, 2006). As per 2011 census, India has 6.41 lakh inhabitant villages. After India embraced globalization as its new economic Dharma in 1991, urbanization is gaining momentum. In 1901, only a mere 10.89% of India’s population lived in urban areas, it reached 17.6% by 1951, which rose to 25.8% in 1991; from there urbanization raised enormously adding 160 million in 20 years, which increased to 31.16% by 2011. In another twenty years, Urbanization is expected to add another 250 million to its existing 377 million, taking the urban population to over 627 million.

Urbanization in India has got a major boost from (1) Natural increase of population in towns (2) Migration of people from Rural to Urban areas (3) Cities encroaching the surrounding villages and growing bigger (4) Government Policies initiating the industrialization in few designated places under the establishment and development of industrial areas programme. The following table gives an account of trends of urbanization in India.

Table 1: Trends of Urbanization in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Urban Population (in millions)</th>
<th>Urban as % of total population</th>
<th>No. of towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>2843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>2365</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>2590</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>3378</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>3768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>5161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>31.16</td>
<td>7936</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled with the help of various census reports

Unplanned Urbanization

In reality, there is hardly anything called as Urban Planning in India. The Urban Ministry, Urban Planning department miserably failed to foresee the growth and plan for the future urban growth.
Urban areas in India hence grew in haphazard and unscientific manner without proper planning. But population grew, Vehicles too. The net result is that majority of Indian cities are already choking under its own weight. Lack of urban infrastructure has lead to roads which is good for traffic jams and congestion. There is acute shortage of housing, water, power, sanitation, public transportation facilities, inadequate playgrounds and recreational facilities. But the adequacy is more in growth of multiple problems like waste management, provision of management of services, reducing green cover, extreme micro climates and so on.

**Problem of Housing**

The Directive Principles of the Constitution of India has intended to make the housing as the human right. The Supreme Court, in various judgments has upheld this as an integral part of the right to life. But unfortunately after six decades of planning, India is far from attaining it. In eleventh five year plan document (2007 – 2012), the shortage of the urban housing is estimated at 26.53 million. Majority of them belong to socially and economically weaker sections. But till today, there is no successful comprehensive housing scheme for the urban poor.

The socially and economically and weaker sections unable to afford the houses in urban areas live in slums. It is estimated that 158.42 million is living in the India’s urban slum by the mid of 2011. It means that 42% of urban population in India lives in Slums. In India capital New Delhi 50% and in India’s business capital, Mumbai, 60% lives in slums. Slums are devoid of any human living conditions and they breed all kind of epidemics. Does it mean that more the development, more the slums! The unfortunate thing is there is a sizable population which do not get space even in slums and which is compelled to live on pavements, railway platforms, under flyover etc. But the inclusive urban planning never includes them in their scheme of housing!

**Sanitation and safe drinking water**

“The combined effects of inadequate sanitation, unsafe water supply and poor personal hygiene are responsible for 88% of childhood deaths from diarrhea” (UNICEF). India still has the largest number of persons who defecate in open. It is estimated that still 625 million do not have sanitation facilities. In that 67% belong to rural areas and 14% belong to urban areas. The then urban minister Jairam Ramesh calls this as ‘national shame’ and shows his sincerity and severity of the problem. But this statement does not forgive the government’s failure to provide adequate sanitation and hygienic facilities to Indian during the past six decades of planning.

It is estimated that 20% of urban dwellings do not have safe drinking water facility. Government in its draft of National Water Policy, 2012 favors privatization of drinking water, so that it can with draw from its role as service provider. When successive governments has failed to provide drinking water to needy urban households, can the private service providers who work for profit provide them the drinking water is a billion dollar question?
Transportation and urban Infrastructure

In the whole of India, hardly we find a city, where in adequate infrastructure is available. The Urban roads in India are not capable to accommodate the massive traffic of cites. Added to it is the poor maintenance of these roads. In majority of urban India, leave the forgotten rural India; we have only two types of roads in Urban India namely:

(1) Bad roads

(2) Good roads with good potholes.

With lack of adequate public transport, every day hundreds of vehicles enter the already congested roads, majority of it is constituted by two wheelers. More two wheelers always consume more space and cause more pollution. Added to it every BPO, IT firms runs a transport company of its own. Many of the flyovers constructions are planned, but they never flew above the plan paper. If at all they flew out and get executed, they never get completed without draining out the additional resources as well as masses time and patience. As they would never complete in time.

The newly constructed airports, railway stations and Bus stands are become congested, as soon as they are constructed. They are not constructed without foresight and vision. These infrastructure projects should be planned with estimation of minimum of 50 years of future urban planning.

Solid Waste Management in Urban Areas

The other important problem the India’s of India’s growing urban area is managing the solid waste management. Urban India generates over 188500 tons per day, which is 68.8 million tons per year. With every passing year, the solid waste generation is also increasing by minimum of 7% annually. The highly urbanized western countries generates high amount of waste. It varies between 2.75 Kg to 4 Kg per day per Individual. The per capita generation of waste in Urban India varies between 250 grams to 800 grams per day, i.e. on an average 0.6 Kg of solid waste per day, per Individual is generated in urban India. An urban local body, in India, on an average spends around Rs.650 to Rs.2000 per ton of which 60 to 70 % goes on collection, rest on transportation. Many of the urban areas are not spending any amount on treatment and scientific disposal of waste. It has created many health and environment in waste disposal sites.

Urbanization and change in Consumption Pattern
In the globalised urban India, the consumer patterns and wants are generated by industries and corporation. The supply driven consumer wants are created and maintained through advertising. The consumption expenditure of Indians during post reform period, since 2005 is growing at 14 percent per annum and present it is worth $ 450 billion. Hence India has become popular destinations for many global companies. There is macodnoldisation of food culture is urban India. Corn flakes, Pijas, Pistas, Chacos, Sandwitch are taking the place of Idli-chauttny, Dosa, Puri-sagu, Upma and Chapathi-veg fry. The traditional saree, chudidhar is taken over by Midi, frocks, ripped jeans and Leggings. The men’s dress is also undergoing lots of changes. Lesser one wear, the more fashionable is one in these days. Wearing long hairs, wearing ear rings, are becoming more fashionable in men. The western celebration of father’s day, mother’s day, friendship day, Valentine’s Day is slowly creeping in at the places of Rakhsa bandan, Holi and other festivals.

The global advertising companies are using the psychological strategy to hook consumers. The sky rocketing Dil-Mange more(my heart desires to have more!) consumption pattern and life style is also causing lots of problems in solid waste management, increased pollution, and increased private vehicles.

Increased Pollution

Pollution is on rise in Indian urban areas. The mostly monitored air pollutants are particulate matter (PM), Nitrogen dioxide,(NO2), Sulphur Dioxide(SO2),and a limited scale Carbon Monoxide. 70 % of the air pollution is caused by the emissions of the vehicles. The central pollution control board has found that less than 2% of cities have low air pollution on the basis of PM10 levels (Respirable particulates). In India, the air pollution is believed to cause more than 5½ lakh fatalities a year. The water pollution is also at alarming levels.

Increased Regional and Income disparity

Urban India has boosted the vulgar salaries. The CEOs of the company is more than 50 crores per annum, which is 12500 times the per capita income of the country (Khursheed Salman, 2009). There is a wide disparity of income even with urban area and more so with Urban rural area. Urban areas also have poverty amidst plenty. The rich and middle class are seen as peer group and there will be unrest in the society.

Urbanization not all that bad

Everything about Urbanization in India is not just bad. It had helped India to stand in midst of developed world. India in few pockets of Urban areas have developed the infrastructure, which matches the west. India has developed world class industries and services and are pioneers in few technologies. The west looks at these centers to invest and learn! (Forget the region disparities!).
It has developed universally recognized education centers in urban areas (Do not try to look in the world top 100 Universities 2012: reputations ranked by Times Higher Education). Urban areas boost good hospitals of world class (Indian politicians prefer western hospitals). It has provided innumerable employment opportunities to the skilled and unskilled (forget white collar Unemployment!).

**Policy Recommendations**

In order to make worth living in our urban areas, so that it contribute to sustainable development, the following policy recommendations are suggested. All the policy recommendations suggested here are not completely unique, new, and original. They have already highlighted in many reports and researchers. The government has to implement it vigorously

1. India should plan the urban growth and monitor it properly
2. The optimum city size of the urban area should be fixed; the satellite town should be developed
3. The corporation and municipalities should be strengthened by appropriate laws and finance. Many urban corporations/municipalities in India lack funds. Their aggregate revenue of urban local bodies is less than 1 per cent of GDP, though ⅔ of India’s GDP and more than 80% of India’s total tax revenue is generated in the urban areas (Bardan Prakash, 2010). They should be made self sufficient
4. Urban Infrastructure should be developed on priority basis
5. Public transportation should be improved. The existing railway line in all the cities should be utilized to run the city services local trains along with metro and mono rail. Low cost efficient public services will help to make masses use public transport. The case of tamilnadu local bus services is the best example.
6. Slum Clearance board should made operational in real terms. The once rehabilitated slum dwellers should be monitored not to rent out the house and venture to create and again stay in one more slums.
7. Basic amenities should be provided to the every locality and to improve the standard of living of urbanites
8. ⅓ of population of India is living in urban area and is generating more than ⅔ of the country Solid waste. A scientific approach to lessen the generation of solid waste and thereafter treating the solid waste should be immediately implemented.
9. Rain water harvesting should be mandatory in urban areas, so that ground water can be recharged.

Conclusion

People, private and Government should equally participate to make our urban areas the place of worth living. If the socially and economically weaker sections are also part of inclusive growth of urbanization, then a sustainable faster inclusive urbanization is definitely possible. It will also in true sense, make the urbanization as one of the indicator of development and not a delusion.

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