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Rurban Centres : The New Dimension of Urbanism

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Abstract

In recent years urbanization has become synonym to development. Developing countries like India has experienced huge shift in the economy from agrarian base to service oriented employment. Indian cities unlike the western are not planned; they evolve in layers as a testimony to different period. The settlement may be organic, with heterogeneity yet very well reflects the interwoven social fabric. As a result of urbanization the urban sprawl is approaching the rural hinterlands. The line of distinction is fading away between urban and rural. A new type of settlement is emerging which once termed as conurbation by the Scottish planner Patrick Geddes. The area with diffusion of urban and rural activities is termed as RURBAN. These rurbancentres are new emerging towns that are governed by rural local bodies, the activities possess in these areas are urban in nature. The paper attempts to develop a understanding of issues and challenges, possibilities and potential and development guidelines for this upcoming new centres of urban growth.

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1. Introduction

The Urbanization process has huge impact on most important dimensions of economic, social and physical change especially in developing countries such as India. Although as per High Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) led by Dr. Isher Judge Ahluwalia, "India is urbanizing at slower pace as compared to other developing countries". Census of India 2011 states growth of urban population to 377 million with the 2.76% of growth rate per annum during 2001-2011. The percentage of population in urban areas of India has increased from 17.3% in 1951 to 23.3% in 1981 and then to 31.8% in 2011 as per Census of India. Urbanization is an indicator of economic development (Eleventh Five Year Plan, 2007-2012).

The Diffusion of impact of urban centres to rural hinterland through urbanization is major reason behind the economic, social and physical changes (Raaz K Maheshwari 2014). Figure 1 shows declination of rural population from 82.7% in 1951 to 68.9% in 2011.

The High Powered Expert Committee Report states "As the Indian economy moves up the growth trajectory with greater trade and investment, growth should become relatively more labour absorbing. In the years to come, with the nature of non-agricultural growth a crucial determinant of both the quantum and quality of agricultural growth, the growth in non-agricultural economic activity will entail a decline in the dependence of population on agriculture. This would suggest that migration from rural to urban areas is likely to be an important factor contributing to the process of urbanization of the Indian economy."

The Expansion of Urban cities causes positive as well as negative impacts on nearby rural areas. Urbanization has caused in impacts on many small towns and large villages

where there is diffusion of urban and rural activities which is termed as rurban.

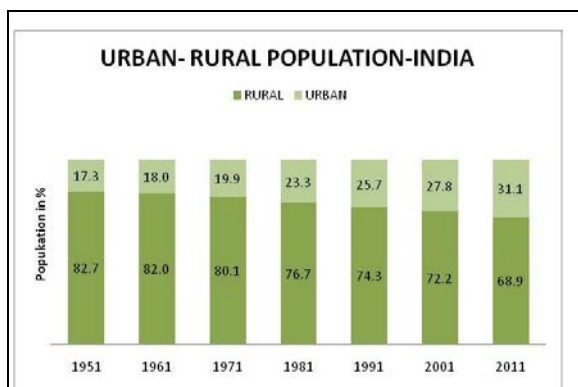


Figure 1: Urban Rural Population in India
Source: Census of India

Table 1: Classification of Towns in India(Numbers)

Cities Classification	Categories	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Class I	more than 1 L Lakh Cities	74	107	151	226	322	441	509
Class II	50,000-1 Lakh Large Towns	111	139	219	325	421	496	604
Class III	20,000-50,000 Medium towns	375	518	652	883	1161	1387	1909
Class IV	10,000-20,000	670	820	988	1247	1451	1564	2234
Class V	5,000-10,000 Small Town	1189	847	820	920	971	1042	2190
Class VI	Below 5,000	638	268	296	348	289	231	502

Source: Adapted from Census of India

Table 1 depict the huge influx of population in urban areas of India from independence till date. The higher natural increase might be the reason for the growth of small towns. The source of urbanization is majorly because of natural increase (59.2% in 1991-2001) as compared to net migration from rural areas (21% in 1991-2001) (HPEC 2011). The people

from rural areas migrate to nearby small and medium towns as the cost of living is high in large and metro cities. These large cities have now reached to saturation point that also becomes the cause of migrants from rural areas to move to small and medium towns. The increase in number of Class I to Class III towns is approximately seven times from 1951 to 2011, whereas the increase in small towns is negligible.

Table 2: Growth of Towns in India

Table 2 depicts the decade 2001-11 has witnessed growth of 3894 such census towns as against 1362 in 1991-2001, while statutory towns have only increased marginally from 3799 to 4041 in number in the same decades. (Pradhan 2012) This immediate increase in Census Towns in India is due to reclassification of villages or Outgrowth to Census Towns or in rarely cases declassification of Statutory Towns to Census Towns. Distribution of urban population amongst different class of cities also reveals that urban population is more concentrated in large cities. Increase in population of urban centres is more in class I towns and declining in small towns. In 1901 urban population in class I cities was 26.3% that has raise up to 68.6 %in 2001. At the same time the percentage of population of small town has decreased from 46.4% to 9.4% in the same time period. This represent occurrence of top heavy urbanization.

	Types of Towns/UA/Ogs	Number of towns	
		2011	2001
1	Statutory Towns	4,041	3,799
2	Census Towns	3,894	1,362
3	Urban Agglomerations	475	384
4	Out Growth	981	962

Source : Census of India

Though urban population below poverty line has declined significantly from 49% to 25.7%, still the slum population is very high in Metropolitan cities especially in Greater Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata

These changes have brought transformation in physical, social, economical, cultural and environmental sectors. The emerging urban areas experience increase in land values very often because of speculation, mixed landuse and shift in economy from agriculture to secondary and tertiary services. The social structure also gets affected due to increase in population. The depletion of natural resources and loss of cultural values is also linked with these urban areas.

2. Urban Rural Transformation

Large rural settlements or small towns are known as rurban centres (Mandal 1989). The rurban centres were first defined by Galphin in 1915 for 'rural' land in process of conversion to 'urban'. Many Scholars has termed rurban centres as urban villages, rurban settlement, rural towns, rural urban fringe, rural urban continuum, Peri urban area, metropolitan fringe, Desakota and sub towns. The rurban centres are lying in the transitional stage between village and towns to serve the surrounding areas (R. S. Shikalgar 2013). (Mandal 1989) Rurban centres are developed villages and appear in a form of urban islands in the vast sea of rurality. Rurban centres are developed villages and appear in a form of urban islands in the vast sea of rurality(R. S. Shikalgar 2013). Rurban centres contains urban characteristics but are mostly governed by Rural Local Bodies (Gram Panchayats). Considering these characteristics of rurban centres, Census towns are also termed as Rurban centres.

Table 3: The Continuum of Settlements from Rural to Urban

Rural	Ambiguous	Urban
Unambiguously rural settlements with most of the inhabitants deriving a living from farming and or forestry	'Large villages, small towns and small urban centres. Depending on each nations definition of urban varying proportions of these are classified as rural and as urban. Mixed Land use Persistence of Rural and Urban Activities	Unambiguously Urban centres with much of the economically active population deriving their living from manufacturing or services
Populations of rural settlements range from farmsteads to a few hundred inhabitants	Population range from a few hundred to 20,000 inhabitants	In virtually all nations, these include settlements with 20000+ inhabitants ; in most they include many settlements with far fewer than 20,000 inhabitants

Source: Human Settlements Discussion Paper -Urban Change3, 2006

Rurbanization is the diffusion of urban activities and population in rural spaces around metropolis (Bauer G 1975). The definition derived by (Kurtz and Eicher) states rural urban fringe has the location beyond the limits of legal city, in the agriculture hinterland exhibiting characteristics of mixed landuses, with no consistent pattern of farm and nonfarm dwellings. The working populations are engaged in both rural and urban occupation. These areas have potential towards population growth and escalating densities. The present density of rurban centres lies intermediated to urban and rural densities. Table 3states the ambiguous nature of rurban centres.

These rurbancentres may be commercial, administrative, transportation, industrial or religious node. Rurbancentres act as a major node for market villages. Urban amenities that exist in rurbancentres are retail and wholesale marketing facilities, Post and telegraph facilities, market, dispensary, veterinary hospital, rural professional services, high school and community block development offices. Table 4 discusses the unique features of rural urban continuum as compared to rural and urban areas.

Table 4 : Features of Rural Urban Continuum

Rural		Urban
<p>Livehoods drawn from crop cultivation, livestock, forestry or fishing(i.e key for livelihood is access to natural capital)</p> <p>Access to land for housing & building materials not generally a problem</p> <p>Access to infrastructure & services limited (largely because of distance, low density and limited capacity to pay)</p> <p>Fewer opportunities for earning cash, more for self-provisioning; greater reliance on favourable weather conditions</p> <p>Access to natural capital as the key asset and basis for livelihood</p>	Rural Urban Interface	<p>Livelihoods drawn from labour markets within non agricultural production or making/ selling goods or services</p> <p>Access to land for housing very difficult, housing and land markets highly commercialised</p> <p>Access to infrastructure and services difficult for low-income groups because of high prices, illegal nature of their homes (for many) & poor governance</p> <p>Greater reliance on cash for access to food, water, sanitation, employment & garbage disposal</p> <p>Greater reliance on house as an economic resource (space for production , access to income- earning oppurtunitites , asset & income earner for owners</p>
Urban characteristics in rural locations (e.g. prosperous tourist areas, mining areas, areas with high value crops & many local multiplier links, rural areas with diverse non agricultural production and strong links to cities)		Rural characteristics in urban locations(urban agriculture, village enclaves, access to land for housing through non monetary traditional forms)

Source: *The Urban Part of Rural Development: the Role of Small and Intermediate Urban Centres in Rural and Regional Development and Poverty Reduction,2003*

The various nature and issues of rurbancentresare understood are discussed below.

3. RurbanCharacteristics

The Census Towns termed as rurban in current paper, though are defined by the Census of India as “urban” but are governed by Rural Local Bodies (Gram Panchayats), and in very few cases, by urban local bodies (Nagar Panchayats). According to census, Census Town is census concept and is not a statutory town declared as such by any statute or order of the Government. However, in census jargon, Census Town is a village with specific urban characteristics with minimum population of 5000, Density of at least 400 persons per sq.km. and 75 percent of the male main working population engaged in non- agricultural activities.

A case of Madhya Pradesh census states increase of census town from 55(1991-2001) to 112 (2001-11).Table 5 states the demographic characteristics of census towns in Madhya Pradesh. In Madhya Pradesh maximum number of census towns falls in Class IV,V and Class IV towns. The Average literacy rate of Census towns is 69% and average sex ratio is 916 that are almost equivalent to state literacy rate (77%) and Sex Ratio (924) as per census 2011.Almost 85% of workforce is engaged in other and household activities.

Table 5: Demographic Characteristics of Census Towns of Madhya Pradesh,2011

Class	Populatio n	Number of Census Towns	Number of Household (Average)	Sex Ratio (Average)	Literacy Rate (Average)	Workforce Participation Rate (Other + Household)
II	64213	1	13345	893	75%	96%
III	152036	6	5071	889	69%	86%
IV	337067	26	2750	909	71%	87%

V	506370	68	1632	919	72%	84%
VI	45846	11	932	934	72%	81%
Total	1105532	112	2112	916	72%	85%

Source : Census of India,2011

Figure 2 states the current status of infrastructure in census towns. There are 50% of towns that have open drainage network. Only one Census towns has Fire fighting service within it.

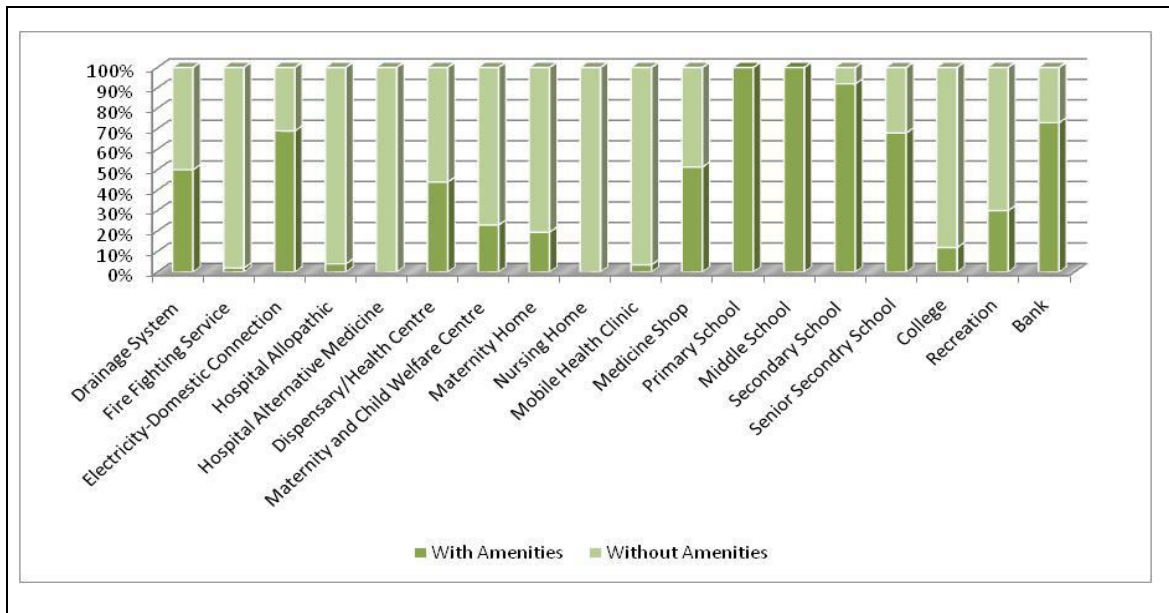


Figure 2: Status of Amenities in Census Town

Source: Census of India,2011

Although, 69% household in census towns are well connected by electricity. The census towns lacks in provision of hospitals, only 4% towns has Allopathic hospitals and 44% of census towns are being served by Health centres. The census towns of Madhya Pradesh totally lack in Medicine and Nursing home, as no amenities exist in these towns. The provision of schools is much better in census towns but only 12% of census towns have colleges. 30% of census towns are served by any recreation facility while others lacks in community hall, stadium and auditorium.

Although Census Towns are within urban frame but they are unable to attain municipal status. All the census towns are characterized by high incidence of mobility, both in terms of migration and commuting (Chatterjee 2014). There are two types of residents in Census Towns, one are Local Residents and other are Migrants. There exist two class of local residents, the one who are involved in trade and commerce and the other into local construction sites. The local residents sell their unproductive land agriculture lands in lieu of money. The former requires the current status of Census towns to refrain themselves from municipal taxes, whereas the later requires municipal status of Census towns to attain basic services like sanitation facilities, drinking water, solid waste management etc.

Census Towns lacks behind social interaction in between local residents and migrants. (Chatterjee 2014). Though the Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA) Scheme, has been proposed to be revamped as the new PURA/ PURA2.0 with the purpose of infrastructure provision and creation of growth poles for development in the rural areas, the focus is only limited to physical infrastructure development. These Census towns lacks in social infrastructure, the hospital and nursing homes are not available at reachable distance. The lack of public transport tends residents to use private modes especially bicycle or sometimes pedestrian mode whereas the major nature of urbanism is efficient public transport.

As per census 2011, the Census Towns are growing at faster rate which depicts high growth of population within these areas. (Pradhan 2012) 37.2% of new census towns are in proximity to class 1 towns, hence they might come under future urban expansion with due process of time. However two third of census towns that are away from major urban centre are still governed by rural administration framework. Though the demands of these census towns are urban, the lack of urban governance unable to fulfill the demands and needs of population residing in these areas.

(Pu Hao 2011) Urban villages are created when agricultural land is used for urban expansion and the built-up component of the rural village remains untouched in order to avoid costly compensation and relocation programs. These urban villages experience the major migrants inflow as they are unable to afford the formal urban housing market. Urban villages are most popular migrant enclave due to availability of accessible and affordable housing units.

Urban villages are those areas where the vast land banks are cleared for development of city. The urban villages experience the problem of integration with existing scenario of urban centres. As mostly industries are setup on the outskirts of cities and due to availability of unskilled labour in urban villages, these residents are positioned in low wages. Hence they become urban poor of the city.

Expansion of city causes relative changes of the nearby villages that have land use change and transformation of occupational structure. The key changes in urban villages are land use change from agriculture to industrial, shift in occupational structure from working in field to working in informal sectors, social change (from original land owner to landlords that provides houses on rent to the migrants) and development of schools, commercial centres within urban villages.

The money received from government with selling of agriculture land is used for construction of houses. These houses are provided on rent to the migrants. Due to lack of norms and rent seeking approach the quality of houses are substandard and daylight and ventilation becomes serious problem. This leads to haphazard and unhygienic development that transforms the former village to slum.

Similarly, Desakota is a region of intense mixture of agriculture and non agriculture activities that often stretch along the large city cores (Philip Shapira 1994). Desakota regions generally have low density as compare to urban centres. Desakota region has diminished rural and small town characteristics.

Land in this region is majorly used as real estate commodity rather than agriculture. The change in occupational pattern from primary to secondary and tertiary sector is observed. Since major density is occupied abutting the road as major development is seen along the highway and road, the road widening becomes very difficult. (Mohammed Firoz C 2014). The high pressure on land and due to more and more built spaces being constructed, Desakota region has resulted in series of environmental issues like loss of vegetation and natural habitat, lowering of water table, natural resource exploitation and degradation, high pollution (Air, water and soil) and high surface runoff of storm water.

4. Conclusion

Rurbancentres are small towns or large villages with existence of rural and urban activities both. Due to urbanization these rurbancentres has become popular migrant enclaves for nearby rural settlements. The rurbancentres usually have low density that lies intermediate between rural and urban settlements. Urban amenities that exist in rurbancentres are retail and wholesale marketing facilities, Post and telegraph facilities, market, dispensary, veterinary hospital, rural professional services, high school and community block development offices. The occupational structures of residents within rurbancentres are majorly involved in nonfarm activities. The existence of mixed activities raise issues described below.

Rurbancentres are mostly governed by rural local bodies whereas the rising population demands for urban local bodies. The financial constraint of rural local bodies fails to fulfill the needs and demands of growing population.

These rurbancentres are dealing through various morphological changes through the process of time. The rising population density in rurban areas has caused increased pressure on land resources, basic amenities and infrastructure facilities. The lack of proper land use planning and building restriction leads to lopsided development. Also these areas lacks in proper zoning leading to haphazard development. The high density abutting the road caused road widening a serious issue. There is increased conversion of agriculture land use to non agriculture land use (Industrial and real estate). The land use change leads to increase of land rates. The ineffective public transport and low economic profile tends residents to use pedestrian ways and bicycles. Due to rural administrative framework these areas lacks in provision of three major basic amenities i.e water supply, solid waste management and sanitation.

The subsequent in-migration from neighboring rural areas makes social adjustment and interaction more complex. Existence of social divide caused due to rising insecurity among local inhabitants as various socio economic and cultural background population are immigrating. Because of improper physical and social infrastructure the quality of life is disturbed. Substandard condition of community halls, primary schools and open spaces persist in these areas. Rurbancentres demands for hospitals, fire station at reachable distance. The transformation of landuse causes high pressure on land that leads to series of environmental issues like, loss of vegetation and natural habitat, lowering of water table, natural resource exploitation and degradation, high pollution (Air, water and soil) and high surface runoff of storm water

The rurban areas which are outcome of urbanization coexist with activities of urban and rural both. These vibrant communities have potential for development and contribute to the secondary and tertiary sector both. If dealt in time, with a planned approach, can contribute to the urban development where cities or urban settlement are looked upon as engine of economic growth.

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