

CHAPTER VIIIThe Place of Urban Agglomerations and other Urban Centres in
Indian Urbanization

It becomes now pertinent to make an assessment of the role of the urban agglomerations and other urban centres in the development of urbanization in India. The proportion of urban population, as found in Table-114 varies widely between the States and Union Territories of the country. However, the only redeeming aspect is that, from 1901 onwards the proportion of urban population has steadily been increasing and which was only 10.84 per cent in 1901, went up to 23.73 per cent in 1981. Table-114 indicates the proportion of urban population to total population by the States and the Union Territories in India between 1971 and 1981. In all the States and the Union Territories the proportion of urban population has increased between 1971 and 1981. The small States of Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim and Union Territories of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram have recorded higher proportion of urban population comprising 26.44, 15.54, 16.23, 6.32 and 25.17 per cent in 1981 as compared with 13.19, 9.95, 9.37, 3.70 and 11.36 per cent in 1971 respectively.

Chandigarh and Delhi are the most urbanised among all the States and Union Territories of India with 93.60 and 92.84 per cent of total population respectively. Among the

Table - 114

Proportion of Urban population to total population

India/State/ Union Territories	1971	1981	Percent of urban population to total urban popu- lation, 1981
India	20.22	23.73	100.00
1. Andhra Pradesh	19.31	23.75	7.93
2. Bihar	10.00	12.46	5.57
3. Gujarat	23.08	31.08	6.76
4. Haryana	17.66	21.96	1.31
5. Himachal Pradesh	6.99	7.72	0.21
6. Karnataka	24.31	23.91	6.86
7. Kerala	16.24	18.73	3.05
8. Madhya Pradesh	16.29	20.31	6.73
9. Maharashtra	31.17	35.03	14.06
10. Manipur	13.19	26.44	0.24
11. Meghalaya	14.55	18.03	0.15
12. Nagaland	9.95	15.54	0.03
13. Orissa	8.41	11.82	1.99
14. Punjab	23.73	27.72	2.96
15. Rajasthan	17.63	20.93	4.57
16. Sikkim	9.37	16.23	0.03
17. Tamilnadu	30.26	32.93	10.20

Table-114 contd.

19. Tripura	10.43	10.93	0.14
19. Uttar Pradesh	14.02	19.01	12.79
20. West Bengal	24.75	26.49	9.24
21. Andaman and Nicobar Island	22.77	26.36	0.03
22. Arunachal Pradesh	3.70	6.32	0.03
23. Chandigarh	90.55	93.60	0.27
24. Dadra and Nagar Haveli	..	6.67	0.01
25. Delhi	89.70	92.94	3.63
26. Goa, Daman and Diu	26.44	32.46	0.22
27. Lakshadweep	..	46.31	0.01
28. Mizoram	11.36	25.17	0.03
29. Pondicherry	42.04	52.32	0.20

Source : Census of India, 1981 Series - 1, India, paper 2 of 1981, Provisional Population Totals.

larger States, Maharashtra is the most urbanised with 35.03 per cent of its population living in urban areas. Next to Maharashtra comes in descending order Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, Punjab and West Bengal where the proportion of urban population to total population is higher than the national average of 23.73 per cent. In contrast, the proportion is lower in the States like Himachal Pradesh, Bihar,

Orissa and Tripura than the national average. Among the Union Territories, except Dadra and Nagar Haveli, ^{and Arunachal Pradesh} all units have a fair proportion of urban population.

The above table also reveals another picture about the contribution of urban population made by each State and Union Territory to that urban population in India. We find that the States of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh together contribute slightly more than half (54.27) of India's urban population. These States along with Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Bihar, Rajasthan, Delhi, Kerala, Punjab, Orissa and Haryana together account for almost the entire urban population in the country.

Table-115 indicates the growth of urban agglomerations and towns recorded from 1901 to 1981. From this table it will be observed that almost all categories of towns have increased in number between 1901 and 1981 except for class V and class VI urban units in which cases a general trend of reduction in the number is clearly noticeable. The significant increase in the number of Class I, Class II and Class III urban agglomerations, cities and towns are striking as they increased by 192 (300 per cent), 223 (542.36 per cent) and 504 (373.3 per cent) respectively between 1901 to 1981. The steady increase in the number of the class I, class II, class III and class IV urban agglomerations, cities and towns, mainly after Independence, is a reflection of the socio-economic development of these areas. Similarly the fall in

Table - 115
Number of Urban Agglomerations ^{/cities} and Towns in India, 1901-31

Size	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
I-VI	1,934	1,776	1,920	2,049	2,210	2,844	2,330	2,531	3,245
I	24	23	23	23	47	74	102	145	216
II	42	39	45	54	77	95	129	173	270
III	135	142	153	193	246	330	449	570	739
IV	393	364	370	439	505	621	732	847	1,043
V	750	713	741	806	931	1,146	739	641	742
VI	490	495	583	524	404	573	179	150	230

Source : Census of India, 1981 India, series-1 paper 2 of 1981 Provisional Population Totals.

the number of class V and class VI urban agglomerations cities and towns is largely due to the movement of these centres into higher classes as a consequence of addition of population or they have merged with urban agglomerations.

Table-116 indicates the distribution of urban population in each of the census year from 1901 to 1931 among the six classes of urban centres. It is interesting to note that except in class I urban agglomerations and towns there has been a reduction in the share of population for all the size classes (Fig.55). For instance, class II and class III urban agglomerations and towns have remained almost in the same position in the share of urban population between 1901 and 1931 while the share has reduced for the class IV, class V and class VI considerably during this period.

The distribution of population in class I urban agglomerations and cities increased quite rapidly after Independence, and is in sharp contrast to the relative increase or decrease of the population in the other size classes. In 1931, the class I urban agglomerations and cities accounted for more than 60 per cent of the total urban population of the country whereas the share of other classes is comparatively very low.

A similar trend of increase in the distribution of population will be noticed in the case of the States and

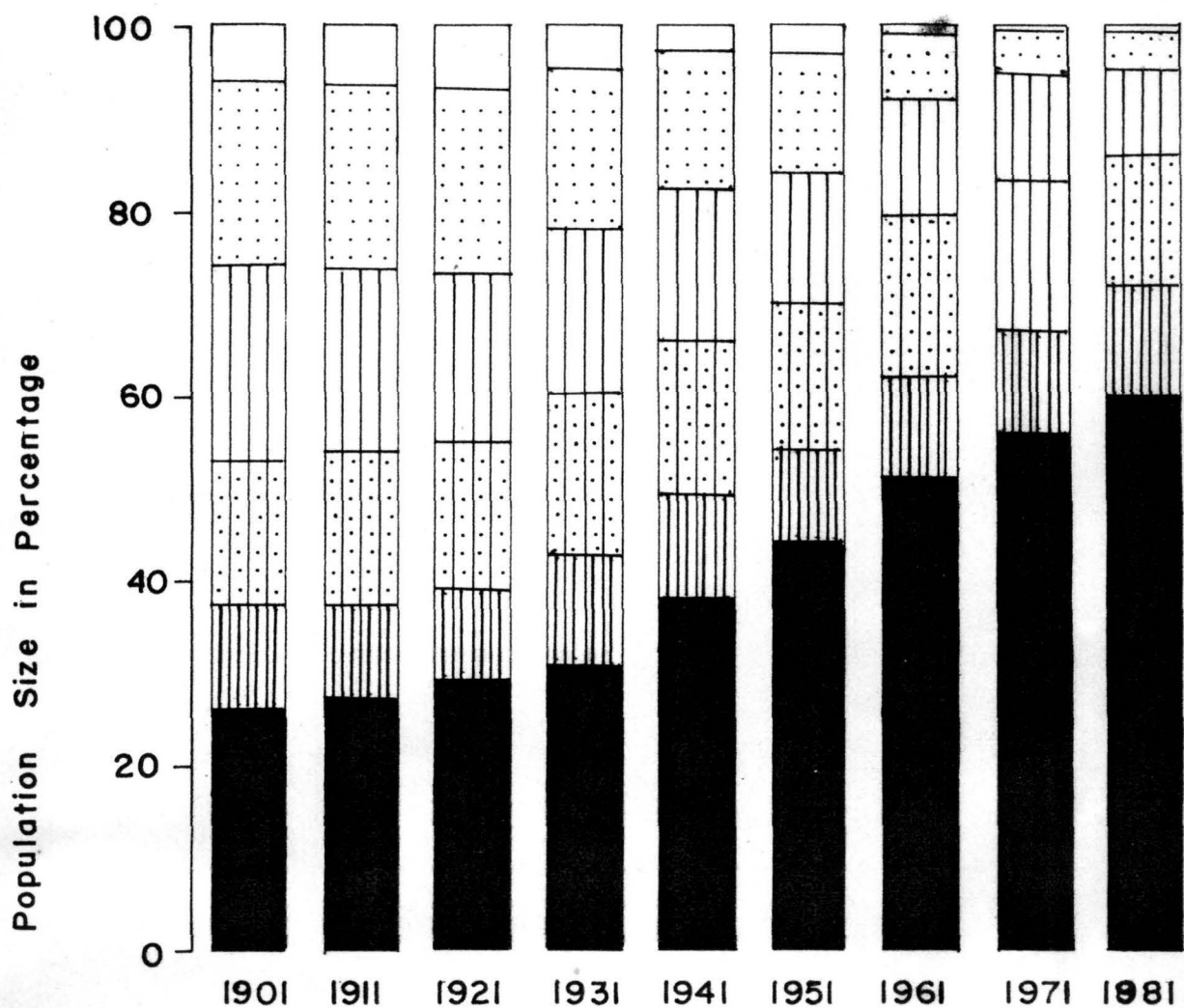
Table - 116

Distribution of Urban population by size-classes India, 1901-1981

Size class	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
I-VI	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
I	25.71	27.19	29.40	30.60	37.93	44.31	50.77	56.21	60.37
II	11.29	10.49	10.33	11.95	11.41	9.95	11.00	11.24	11.65
III	15.77	16.52	16.13	16.93	16.52	15.79	17.41	16.32	14.35
IV	20.92	19.35	18.32	18.07	15.94	13.79	13.00	11.20	9.52
V	20.13	19.31	18.67	17.13	15.13	13.04	7.03	4.57	3.61
VI	6.18	6.64	7.10	5.27	3.17	3.12	0.79	0.46	0.50

Source : Census of India, 1981, India, series 1, paper 2 of 1981, Provisional Population Totals.

Distribution of Urban Population By Size-Class, India, 1901-1981



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- Class VI (Below 5,000 Persons)
- Class V (5,000-9,999 Persons)
- Class IV (10,000-19,000 Persons)
- Class III (20,000-49,000 Persons)
- Class II (50,000-99,000 Persons)
- Class I (10,000 & above Persons)

Fig-55

Union Territories in table-117 which brings out the predominance of class I urban agglomerations and cities followed by class II, class III, class IV, class V and class VI urban

Table - 117

Distribution of Urban Population in States and Union Territories by size classes (in per cent), 1931

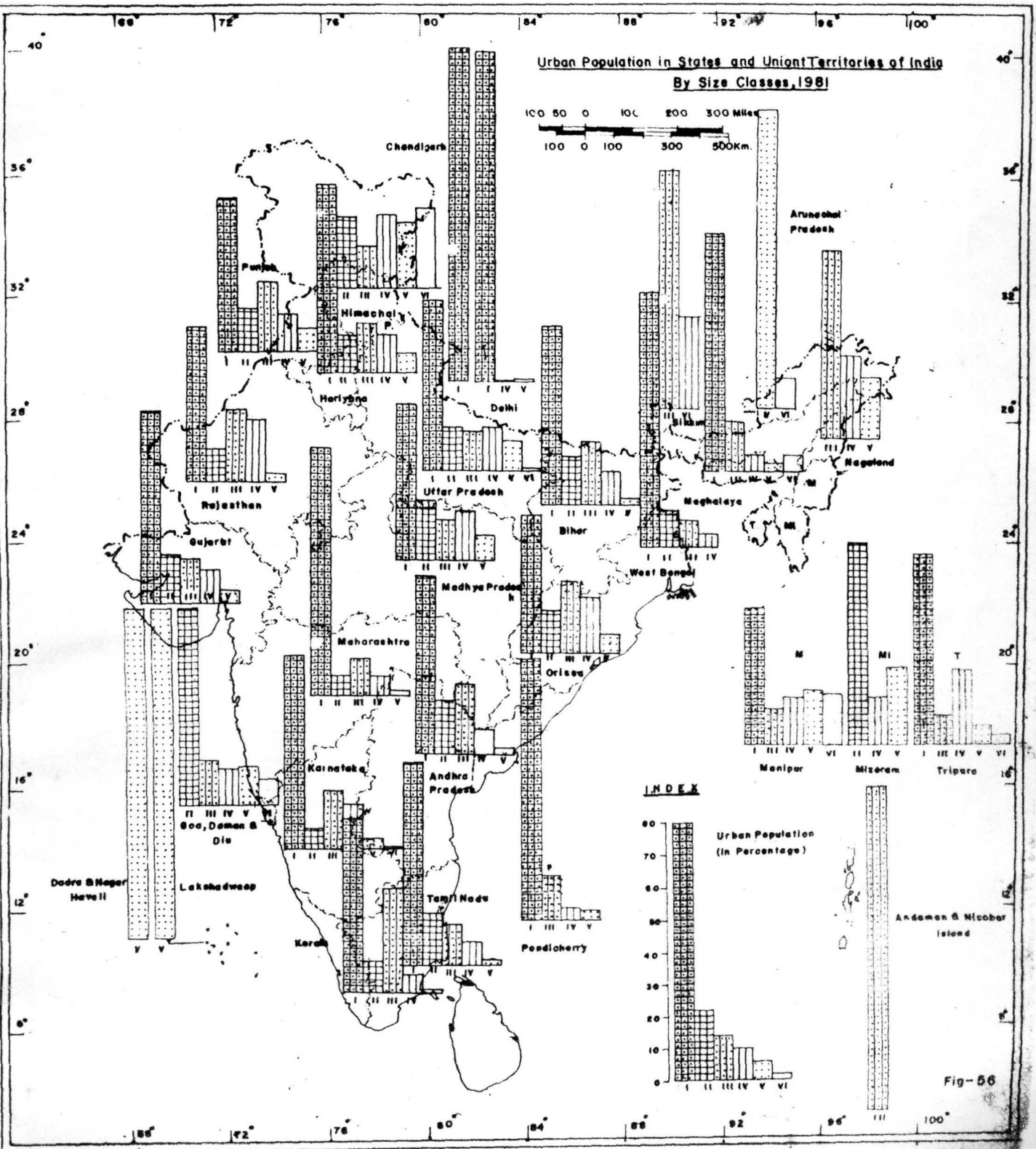
State/Union Territories	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1. Andhra Pradesh	53.69	16.17	20.95	7.32	1.75	0.12
2. Bihar	54.12	14.33	19.26	10.04	2.02	0.13
3. Gujarat	57.92	14.53	13.37	10.23	3.74	0.21
4. Haryana	56.64	10.92	14.80	11.64	5.83	0.27
5. Himachal Pradesh	..	21.54	12.49	22.17	19.72	24.03
6. Karnataka	53.60	6.46	17.75	13.74	2.87	0.53
7. Kerala	53.13	9.52	31.86	4.79	0.70	..
8. Madhya Pradesh	46.84	13.00	12.24	15.13	7.67	0.12
9. Maharashtra	75.24	5.95	10.33	6.10	1.53	0.25
10. Manipur	41.70	..	11.29	14.64	16.72	15.65
11. Meghalaya	72.26	..	14.67	5.39	2.55	5.13
12. Nagaland	..	..	56.86	24.75	13.39	..
13. Orissa	41.63	12.76	21.93	17.03	6.31	0.44
14. Punjab	46.40	13.23	21.31	11.07	6.72	1.22
15. Rajasthan	46.52	10.05	22.02	13.74	2.61	0.06
16. Sikkim	..	..	71.94	..	..	23.06

Table-117 contd.

17. Tamil Nadu	62.19	15.99	12.52	7.40	1.76	0.14
18. Tripura	59.43	..	9.25	23.13	6.02	3.12
19. Uttar Pradesh	51.49	12.71	12.34	13.35	3.55	1.46
20. West Bengal	76.34	10.73	7.71	3.46	1.05	0.16
21. Andaman and Nicobar Island	..	..	100.00	..	..	..
22. Arunachal Pradesh	..	..	..	..	90.42	9.53
23. Chandigarh	100.00					
24. Dadra and Nagar Haveli					100.00	
25. Delhi	99.32			0.22	0.46	
26. Goa Daman & Diu		60.12	13.33	11.13	11.53	3.79
27. Lakshadweep					100.00	
28. Mizoram		61.33		14.43	23.64	
29. Pondicherry	79.56		13.73	3.63	3.03	

Source : Census of India, 1931 India, series - 1, paper 2 of
1931, Provisional Population Totals.

agglomerations and towns (Fig.56). Among the 20 States in India (Assam and Jammu & Kashmir excluded by the census) 3, namely Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Sikkim have got no class I urban agglomerations and cities. Besides, all the States have the largest part of their population residing in class I urban centres. West Bengal, the leading State in this



regard in having the largest share of urban population living in class I urban agglomerations and cities, is followed by Maharashtra, Meghalaya and Tamil Nadu.

A General Assessment

India is now passing through a rapid phase of urbanisation which is growing at a faster rate (44.51%) than the average rate of growth of the nation (21.37%). The proportion of urban population to total population was only 10.34 per cent in 1901 but in 1981 it went up to 23.73 per cent, being the highest in Indian history.

Urbanisation is an index of the economic and industrial progress of the country. The rate of urban growth was small and unsteady upto 1921, afterwhich it has been faster and steadier which indicates the stability in the economic life and expansion in industrial activities. The accelerated pace of industrialisation is the basic fact behind rapid urban growth. Within a short span of time. The heavy influx of the rural population to the towns in the wake of industrial growth has resulted in an acute shortage of housing, drinking water, electricity, medical, educational, recreational and other urban facilities. The price of land and the rental value of urban houses have increased many times and the incidence of crimes, burglary and thefts have increased with the deterioration of law and order situation in the large and industrial urban centres.

The population growth in large cities has been the result of both the natural increase and migrational flow of people from the rural and small towns who are drawn to the cities for economic reasons. The migration takes place because labour moves from lower income area to higher area mainly in the city in search of better living. Today, major centres are industrial with powerful magnetic attraction giving better wage rate to its workers than those working in the agricultural sector. It is true that there is no balance in the distribution of economic activities among the urban centres or rural areas. The high concentration of activities, particularly industries in the large cities, create a gravitational force for the migrants but the small and medium towns, on the contrary, due to weak infrastructural facilities have not attracted industries to be located there. The result is noticeable in the faster growth of larger cities and decline of small and medium towns which have failed to receive additional burden of urban population or even sometime lose their population. The larger urban centres are also the seats of important services like government, finance, banking and bulk trading. So, a large number of rural migrants consisting of the landless labourers, carpenters, barbers, potters etc. come to large cities or metropolitan areas to find out new employment opportunities. In fact, poverty and unemployment in rural areas drive the migrants to the city and mostly the young people migrate from rural areas to cities and

though economic rewards may not be greater, the social prestige will be greater as many of the rural folk take agriculture as a lowly job.

In a sense, India presents the best example of 'overurbanisation' which means that the Indian cities are growing more rapidly than what they are equipped for. As a result, in all walks of life there are shortages among which the shortages of employment and housing in every urban area most pronounced. The adequate supply of drinking water is one of the burning problems in various parts of the country. There is a big gap between the quantity of water required and the quantity supplied. The dearth of urban transport results in heavy traffic congestion during peak hours. In order to avoid the frequent journey, a large number of the lower income group like hawkers, rickshaw pullers, loaders, hotel boys and low paid illiterate and semi-literate industrial workers who can not afford living in highly rented houses prefer to reside near the core of the city. They, therefore create bustees or slums in commercial areas, railway stations, bus terminals or in the obscure parts of the city, occupying lands illegally which are without the basic civic services.

In otherwords, it seems that if the present trend continues, the future of urbanisation in India will be disastrous, as "urbanisation will be a process of crisis, affecting every aspect of urban life with severe and chronic deficits and innumerable other difficulties. This is the

tragedy of overload and over-urbanisation and causes concern for the future of urbanisation in India".⁽¹⁾

The rapid growth of urbanisation is, no doubt, a good sign for any country but it should not be confined to only the large cities or metropolitan areas, confronted with formidable amount of chronic problems which are unsurmountable in many ways due to perpetual spurts in demographic growth.

Indian economy is based on rural activities on which above 76 per cent of the total population is dependent for their livelihood. It is surprising that of the total urban population in the country over 60 per cent live in class I urban agglomerations and cities which strongly underlines the uniform as well as unbalanced growth of urbanisation in the country. Urban planners and administrators should tackle the uneven, unbalanced and onesided urbanisation, restricted mostly to higher classes of urban centres. The total solution to the problems created in large cities and urban agglomerations may not be easy to find out. The first and foremost solution, however lies in stemming the immigrational flow into these centres though it is clear that curbing migration can not be the total solution to the major problems of metropolitan or large urban centres. Migration is the result of diverse opportunities available in the larger cities and metropolitan areas together with lack of development in the rural areas and smaller urban centres. Since it is not possible to stop immigration, the objective should be to curb further growth

of the large cities and metropolitan areas and providing development incentives for the growth centres for achieving a more balanced growth of urbanization.

The satellite towns or ring towns help in the dispersal of population from city centre but they create great pressure on transport system, as the large cities or metropolitan areas remain as the centres of diversified activities. We often say that the dispersal of industries is the steering hand in the dispersion of population from big cities but it is not true at all times as any big industry may not be set up far beyond the resource areas, the latter mainly constituted by raw materials, power, labour and market. In that case, small and cottage industries can be set up in small towns and rural areas.

Urban poverty is an exposed form of rural poverty. Therefore, action against poverty has to be initiated in the rural areas by proper regional planning avoiding all political bias. The improvement of agricultural technology is one of the primary objectives of development planning to reduce the dependence on agriculture and evolve a more diversified occupational structure which makes rural areas more stable. The development of rural areas is not possible until the economic and social stagnation is broken and rural-urban disparities between wage rates, income levels and employment opportunities are considered.

It is possible to say that an abnormal growth of population in big cities is an index of failure of policies of dispersal of industries, development of small towns etc. In India, to develop rural areas, it is necessary to create more small towns. This would remove the existing gap between large towns and small rural settlements. The small towns will help to absorb the rural migrants and save the large cities from overcrowding. Further, these towns can actively serve as growth centres for the development of surrounding rural areas providing various social, educational and health services. The strategy of economic diversification makes it necessary to advocate rural economic growth, now heavily dependent on agriculture, through the introduction of new cottage and small-scale industries based on agriculture, forest or animal based products and the revival of traditional crafts. The small towns may act as supplying centres for various inputs like seeds and fertilizers, repair and servicing of agricultural implements, raw materials for rural based industries, credit and banking facilities and marketing facilities for the rural surroundings. The development of declining and slow growing urban centres will not only help in containing the out-migration but also absorb rural migrants and check their tide towards large cities and metropolitan areas.

The gradual pressure of population in large cities resulting from immigration would be relieved, if a new policy is adopted for introducing permit system which, in

reality, will not succeed in our country as there is great difference in socio-economic conditions between the city and the country. The process of urbanisation will be balanced and accelerated if the agricultural modernisation programme succeeds and other necessary amenities like housing, roads and transportation, health centres, electricity, educational facilities and piped water supply come up side by side.

A master plan should be egalitarian and should serve the needs not only of the upper classes of the society but should also create an environment in which even the urban poor can live with human dignity. Urban planners should be conscious of their responsibilities for the social, economic and cultural welfare of the urban poor like domestic workers, casual labours, construction labours, hawkers, pedlars, vendors and petty shopkeepers who make a sizeable portion of the urban population.

In short, the following policies are necessary to develop an urban-rural continuum replacing the existing urban-rural dichotomy and develop an healthy and balanced urbanisation in India :

i) to promote the development of smaller towns and new urban centres to ease the pressure of increasing urbanisation;

ii) to develop declining and slow growing urban centres as growth foci and making them more productive and

efficient by developing the necessary and efficient socio-economic infrastructure in them;

iii) to develop cottage and small scale agro-based industry and revival of traditional crafts in rural areas, the supply of raw materials at cheap rates, financial help and marketing facilities are necessary;

iv) to integrate and strengthen the interdependence between the town and the surrounding rural areas the diversity of occupational base of the rural areas is a must;

v) to augment civic services in urban and rural areas as far as possible to make them fit for a reasonable level of living;

vi) to locate new industries away from the large cities and metropolitan areas;

vii) deconcentration of economic activities from the core of the city;

viii) environmental improvement of slums and bustees;

ix) efforts to tackle the problems of cities and metropolitan areas on a more comprehensive and regional basis.