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Research Article

Regional Planning: A hope to overcome Migration Challenges in India

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Abstract
Balanced development at regional level is a prerequisite for the progress and growth of an economy as well as to attain the better quality of life of their residents. The balanced regional development can be achieved by ensuring the compatibility between forward and backward linkages among the urban and rural settlements. However, the shifting of the overall economic base from agrarian to industrial and presence of more opportunities in urban centres has triggered a continuous stream of population from the country sides to urban centres. On the other hand, access to social, economic and physical infrastructure is inadequate in rural areas that are acting as push factors for rural populations towards urban counterparts.
This paper highlights the lopsided urbanization scenario in India where 70.2 percent of the total urban population is accommodation in class-I towns. The inter-state migration accounts for 98.7 percent of the total migrants. Further the detailed analysis of the stream of migration reflects that 36.1 percent of the migration is occurring from rural to urban areas due to different reasons. The paper suggests that regional planning can act as a hope to check this situation and treat issues in a holistic manner to achieve the objective of balanced development through provision of appropriate infrastructure.

1.   Introduction

As per census of India 2011, the urban areas of the country accommodate nearly 377 million (31.12 percent) population of the country whereas the rural areas are accommodating the rest 833 million (68.88 percent) people. The division of the country into urban and rural areas is a result of unequal infrastructure growth (Sukla and Mishra, 2010). This further leads to rural to urban migration that constitutes 36.1 percent of the inter-state migration in the country. The availability of work opportunities, better educational facilities and family including marriage are among the main reasons for migration. Thus, the hope of better living conditions attracts migrants from rural areas towards the urban centers.

The term 'regional planning' consists of "region" that can be defined as the spatial entity that consists of both the distinct and interconnected characteristics and the practice of 'planning'. Sir Patrick Geddes first gave the concept of regional planning in 1915. He put forward the integration among 'place, work and folk' to establish the integration between economic and socio-cultural aspects where a city cannot be isolated from the countryside due to its wider influence over the area. Influenced by the ideas of Geddes, Lewis Mumford further advanced the concept of regional development through an ecological planning approach. Harvey Perloff (1968) stressed that regional planning has to deal with specific objectives that are different from those that intended to strengthen national planning. Seltzer and Carbonell (2011) view regional planning as a flexible way to resolve issues across jurisdictions without considering the size and

spatial extent of regions (Wong, C., 2015). In planning, a region can be designated based on its administrative or functional boundaries and there can be regions based on their interdependence that can be called as planning regions (Mishra, 1992). Thus, a region includes a network or a hierarchy of urban centers as well as urban and rural activities that are strongly linked and have functional ties. During the year 2020, the world has faced the COVID-19 pandemic and India too faced similar challenges.

In the year 2020, the world faced a pandemic of COVID-19, in India a nationwide lockdown was initiated on 24 March 2020, by the Government of India due to an accelerated number of COVID positive cases. This sudden lockdown situation was a taruma for the whole population, especially the migrants. The restrictions on mobility and transportation links force these migrants to stay in urban areas. This first part of the paper highlights the trends of urbanisationalong with the proportion of migrants and reasons for migration. The second part covers the theories of regional planning that can be incorporated to check the flow of migrants and the third part, through light on different initiatives taken by the Government of India regarding regional planning.

2.   Urbanisation trends and Proportion of migrants

The urban areas are recognized as engines of economic growth leading to concentration of economic activities and infrastructure provisions. Figure 1 depicts the trends of population and the composition of urban and rural population that indicates the rural to urban shift of the population. Further, the growth rate of rural population has reduced by 1.16 percent in 2011 while the urban population is static at 2.80 percent. The urban areas are growing at a faster pace over decades as shown in figure 2.
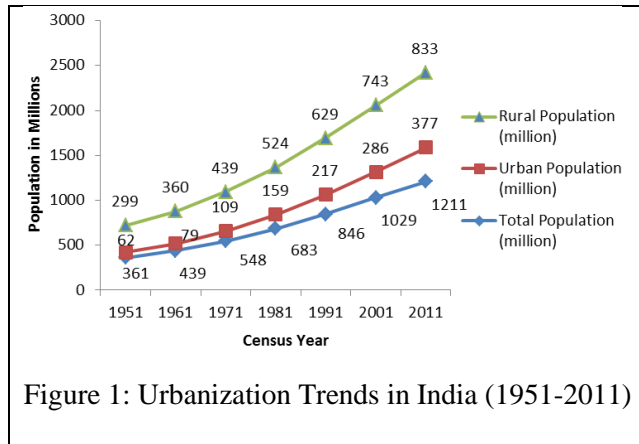

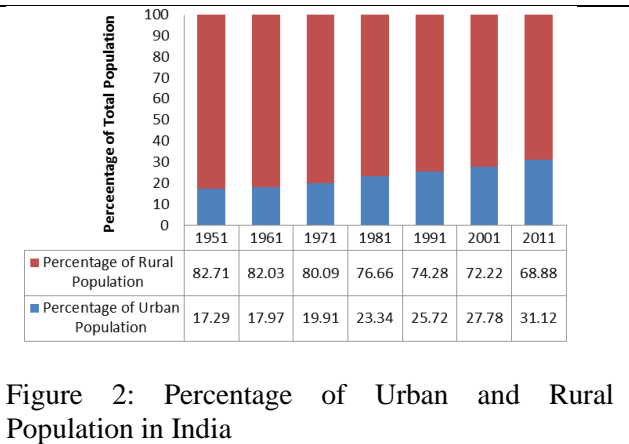Figure 1: Urbanization Trends in India (1951-2011)

Figure 2: Percentage of Urban and Rural Population in India

The lopsided urbanization scenario can be seen from the distribution of population among different sizes of cities. The share of Class I cities increased to 70.2% in 2011, of the total urban population in the country (Figure 3). Further, the number of million plus cities in India also reached 53 in 2011 and these are accommodating 42.62% of the total urban population of the country. However, the share of small and medium cities has been constantly declining over the decades as shown in figure 3.

3.   Reasons for migration

There were 450 million internal migrants in India by the Place of Last Residence (Census of India, 2011). These internal migrants constitute about 37.7% of the total population. Out of which 62 % are the intra-state migrants however 12 % are the inter-state migrants. The main reasons identified for low inter-state migrants are non-availability of subsidized food from the public distribution system and the issues related to domicile restriction in destination cities regarding jobs.The further analysis of data depicts that rural to urban and urban to urban migration accounts for a major share of 36.1 % and 31 % in case of inter-state migration. Thus, the inter-state migration is urban centric.

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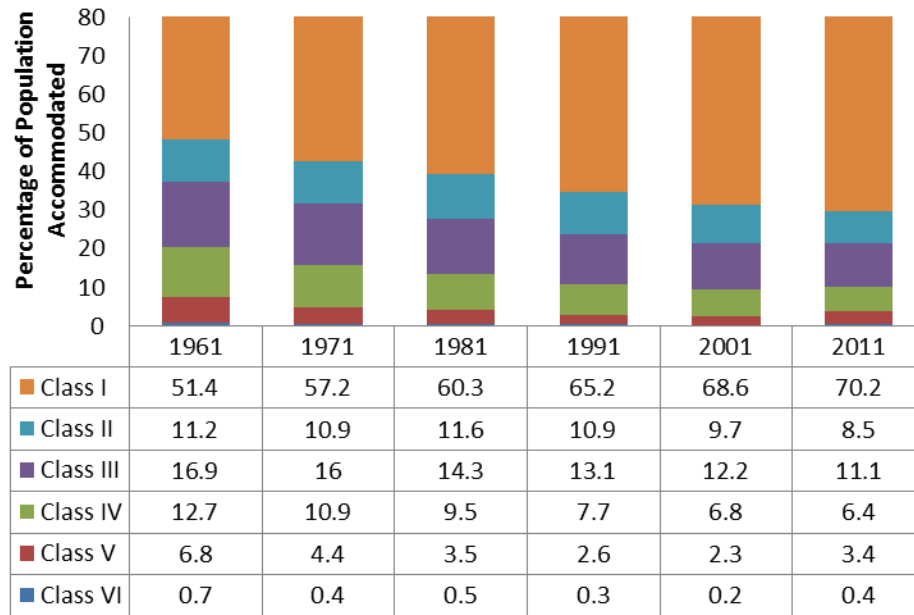|	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Class I	51.4	57.2	60.3	65.2	68.6	70.2
Class II	11.2	10.9	11.6	10.9	9.7	8.5
Class III	16.9	16	14.3	13.1	12.2	11.1
Class IV	12.7	10.9	9.5	7.7	6.8	6.4
Class V	6.8	4.4	3.5	2.6	2.3	3.4
Class VI	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4

Figure 3: Percentage of Population Accommodated as per Size of Town

Further it has been observed that the states of Maharashtra, NCT of Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab are the top five destinations of these migrants according to data of net-immigration. These states accommodated 6 million, 4.8 million, 2.3 million, 1.3 million and 0.7 million immigrants respectively as all these are high GSDP states with higher employment opportunities. This clearly depicts that the prime reason behind inter-state migration is regional disparity (Mukherji, 1991). Since the major migration is occurring for employment, it becomes important to study the literacy level of the migrants. Nearly one-fifth of the migrants are illiterate and 50.1 percent had studies below graduate level (excluding the technical education not equivalent to a degree) (Sikdar, S. and Mishra, P., 2020).

Resultantly, the informal and un-organized sector is the prime absorbent of these migrants. As per the estimates given by the National Commission on Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS, 2007), about 92 percent of the entire workforce is employed in the informal and un-organized sector. Thus, the lower literacy levels of the migrants depicts that they are mainly employed in informal or un-organized sector. But a situation like complete lockdown with restrictions on mobility forces us to think of some alternatives to discourage these migration trends that are mainly occurring with employment as a prime concern.

4.   Regional planning a hope

Regional planning aims at equitable distribution of human population and economic resources through placement and integration of land-uses and infrastructure across the larger area of land rather than focusing on single settlement. Different scholars have given different models and approaches for regional planning in order to ensure balanced development. One such theory was given by Walter Christaler in the year 1933. The theory was named as the central place theory that focuses on the economic relationship between the cities and smaller settlements. The theory was based upon a set of assumptions that includes isotropic landscape (flat and homogeneous surface) and population was seen as evenly distributed with settlements assumed to be equidistant. It also assumes single means of transport along with equal

economic and purchasing power of consumers and sellers that affects markets and placement of services (Altaweel, 2020).
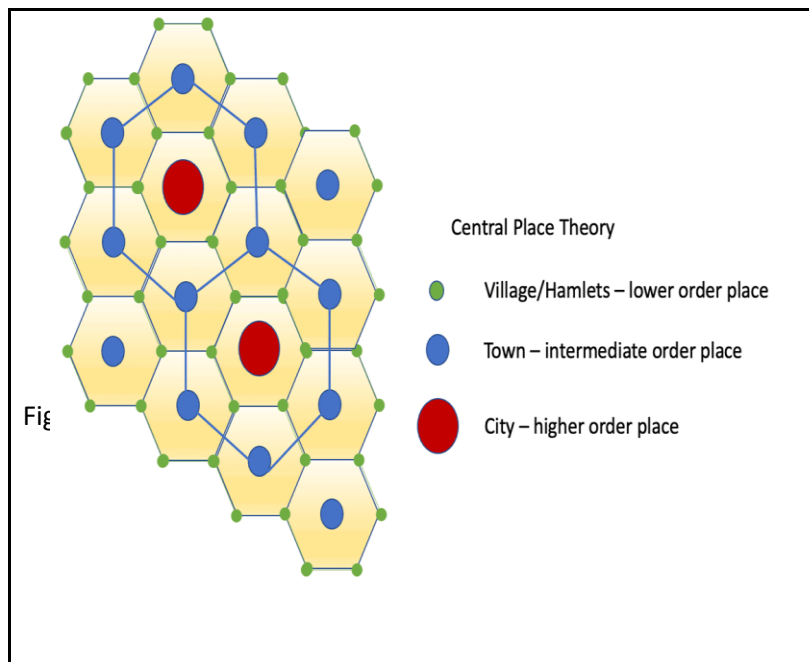
Christaler explained the hierarchy of settlements that includes hamlet/ villages, towns and cities. He further explained the growth pattern of these settlements and as the settlement grows the functions and services provided by the settlements also increases. This further led to growth of the influence area of a settlement. He visualized the central place theory in form of hexagons over a homogenous surface in terms of population distribution, soil fertility, and transportation systems, lower order settlements (villages and hamlets) form a hexagon pattern around intermediate order settlements (towns) which in turn form a hexagon around higher order settlements (cities) (refer figure 4).

However, the Central place theory is criticized due to its assumptions regarding equidistant distribution of settlements. The hexagonal pattern suggested in the theory can get distorted by various complications under the practical situation such as consumer travel behavior that are neither fixed nor can be projected. Other factors such as affluence, changes in taste, and preferences and advancement in technology can also have an impact on future projections.

Another scholar, a famous economist August Losch gave the "Theory of Location" and published a book titled "Economics of Location" in the year 1940. Losch elaborated that the size of a market area marks its service area which is further influenced by the factors of transportation cost and scale economies. If transportation costs are large relative to economies of scale, firms will be scattered around the region. The theory also had assumptions regarding flat surface, constant supply of goods and services, uniform distribution of population and as prices increase the demand decreases and the main aim of entrepreneurs is profit maximization. He further assumes that there are a number of producers located equidistant from each other. Also, the producers move further close as circular areas leave some places unserved between circles and eventually takes the shape of a hexagon The factors including transportation costs, scale economies, and demand helps to determine the size of the individual hexagons. Central places emerge in locations where market areas for different products overlap. The theory was criticised for being abstract in nature, more stress was given to demand and locational interdependence were not considered

Francois Perroux, a French economist gave the "Growth Pole Theory" in 1950. The growth pole theory assumes that growth occurs on specific locations that can be called as points or poles. These growth poles are individuals having an abstract economic space. This concept involves confusion as all growth poles are spatially fixed and exert influence on surrounding areas. However, the aspect of geographical location was later added to the original concept. The adoption of growth pole theory in the urbanisation process by conceptualizing cities as growth poles adds momentum to the development of cities as well as surrounding areas.

Balanced Growth Theory - RagnarNurkse has advocated the strategy of balanced growth for underdeveloped countries. Planned balanced growth indicates that all sectors of the economy will expand in the same proportion so that consumption, investment and income will grow at the same rates (Bhatt, 1964). The main aim of the theory is to increase employment, to improve the transportation network, optimum utilization of resource potential and proper distribution of

Fig

Central Place Theory

• Village/Hamlets – lower order place

● Town – intermediate order place

⬤ City – higher order place

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development projects according to potential. This theory is not very relevant to the study area as the simultaneous development of sectors requires huge investments and developing countries like India cannot afford to mobilize the necessary resources especially in early stages of development.

Unbalanced Growth Theory -This theory was put forth by Prof. H.O. Hirschman. Unbalancing the economy according to a predesigned strategy is the best way to achieve economic growth in developing countries. Investment in a few selected sectors will lead to development opportunities and will pave the way for further regional development and the development will be communicated from the leading sector of the economy to other sectors/areas i.e., from developed areas to less developed areas (Bhatt, 1964). He unbalanced the economy by two things that included social overhead capital and directly productive activities.

Social Overhead Capital: It comprises those basic services without which primary, secondary and tertiary activities cannot function. It includes: education, power, public health, transport, communication. Directly Productive Activities: It includes investment in productive activities in the industries, trade and commerce etc. This theory is applicable to the study area as it talks about developing a few potential sectors of the economy and developing the other sectors/areas as a consequence of the trickle-down effect from the leading sectors. The study area is heterogeneous with limited resources therefore the unbalanced growth theory can be applied to it.

Thus, all the theories have their set of assumptions along with their advantages and disadvantages. In order to encourage the balanced development of a nation or a region, one or more than one of the above theories can be adopted in a given region. The government has worked out different schemes and policies from time to time that can be employed for promoting regional development.

5.   Government Initiatives

The Government of India has taken different initiatives from time to time in order to encourage the development of a nation as a whole by adopting the regional planning approaches. One such programme was launched by the Government of India that was named as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2005. The programme aimed at enhancing livelihood by providing employment opportunities in rural areas for at least 100 days with guaranteed wages. PardhanMantri Gram Sadak Yojana was launched in 2000 that focuses on connecting all the rural areas with the all-weather roads as well as the up gradation of existing roads. The Skill Development Act, 1998 that aims at skill up gradation of rural folk. Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana launched in 1999 at bringing the assisted families above the poverty line by providing them with skill up gradation and training programmes and ensuring their placement.

The Ajeevika-DeenDayalUpadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana deals with providing electricity connectivity in rural areas. The DeenDayalUpadhyayaGrameenKaushalya Yojana aims at skill providing to rural youth and providing jobs above minimum wages. The Central Rural Sanitation Programmer Total Sanitation Campaign aims at improving the general quality of life in rural areas by creating awareness towards sanitation. PradhanMantriAwas Yojana-Gramin deals with provision of housing to rural households. The Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana that focuses on developing Adarsh Gram where the rural population is provided with basic amenities and opportunities within the rural settlement. The National Social Assistance Programme is a centrally sponsored scheme that provides financial assistance to elderly, widows and persons with disabilities. Other than these the Government of India has also launched Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM) where Integrated Cluster Action Plan (ICAP) is prepared for selected clusters of villages in order to ensure balanced development and Detailed Project Reports are prepared for each ICAP (Source: GOI, 2021). During Pandemic various initiatives were launched by Union and State Governments that included Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Packages (PMGKP) launched on 26 March, 2021 worth Rs.1.7 crore this programme aimed to directly target the poor.

Conclusions

Regional planning aims at bringing the economic, social and physical aspects of development into integration in a spatially bounded area. Regional plans have been prepared at different hierarchies such as block, district or sub- national levels. Regional plans are also prepared for resource regions such as river basins. Regional planning is an answer to different issues that are faced by today's world including environmental degradation, economic development needs, and social inequities etc.

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