

Changing Pattern of Urbanization in Punjab

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Abstract-Urbanization is a catalyst of development. Punjab which is one of the most urbanized state of the country, has been greatly influenced by the dominant social and economic scenario. The green revolution of 1960s and 1970s and globalization and liberalization of 1990s had a great impact on the level and spread of urbanization in the state. The industrial and infrastructural development after 1990s saw the gradual turning of evenly distributed urban centers of Punjab into accentuation of urban population. In this study, an attempt has been made to analyze the prevailing factors for the uneven development of urbanization, emergence of some large towns and stunted growth of small towns.

Introduction-Urbanization, though not new to human civilization, has now become so critical to our life that it is considered as important measure of economic advancement of any society. The level of urbanization is very low in our country in comparison with western countries, developed East Asian countries or developing South American countries. The level varies from state to state depending upon level of industrial development, history of settlement evolution and agricultural development and land tenure system. Punjab is one of the highly urbanized state of the country. Upto 1950, the nature of urbanization was controlled by the nature of landholding as the urbanization was dependent on surplus agriculture production. In agriculture, land tenure system is of vital significance. Concentrated land ownership under Zamindari system prevailing in Eastern part of the country since permanent settlement led to the concentration of land in few hands and a great majority of villagers rendered landless depending upon paltry farm wages. The meagre wages made sustenance difficult in their native places. They were mere landless agricultural labourers working on Zamindar's land for paltry wages in the form of few seers of grains. This situation forced these people to move to larger urban centers where myriad job opportunities were ever waiting for them. The Zamindars, too, moved to large urban centers to achieve better standard of life as they were

gaining share without doing any work in the farmsteads. This system gave birth to absentee landlordism which negatively impacted the agriculture production and stagnated the rural economy at the one hand and led to the emergence of a few very large urban centers like Kolkata on the other (Shekhar, 2017). They readily grabbed the opportunities and subsequently called their kith and kins to join the major urban centers making the metropolises like Kolkata. Unlike the eastern India, in Punjab land was equally distributed more or less under Ryatwari system. Therefore, even those villagers belonging to scheduled castes, proportionally highest in the country, were having sufficient land to till and eke out their living without any financial stress. The symbiotic relations developed between market towns and rural areas. Both helped each other to prosper. Another factor which contributed to the income of Punjabi farmers was the first world war (Chatterjee, 2019). Around half a million Punjabi farmers were recruited to fight for the British in Europe. This large number of sepoys greatly increased the income of the Punjab at the one hand and secondly, they got exposed with the level of civic amenities in European urban centers who on their return journey wanted to replicate in their homeland. In post-independence Punjab, the Green Revolution suddenly increased the productivity and henceforth the level of income of farmers, which prompted them to move to urban areas and avail better standard of life. Punjab economy is mainly agricultural and enjoys enviable position among the states in regard to the high yielding variety of seeds, yield per hectare, high irrigation intensity, consumption of chemical fertilizers and electric power (Singh, 1997). The emergence of clusters of industrial centers during 1980s and 1990s changed the age-old small urban centers concept and now million plus urban centers are emerging in this state as well. It is in this background this paper probes changes in the size-class of towns and emergence of metropolitan towns and cities along with spatial patterning urbanization in the state.

The Spatial Pattern of Urbanization-Punjab has higher than the national average of urbanization level. In 2011, 37.49 % of state population was found living in urban areas against 33.9% in 2001. But level of urbanization varies from district to district. In fact, the highly urbanized districts of Ludhiana (59.16%), SAS Nagar(54.76%), Amritsar (53.58%) and Jalandhar (52.93%) contain more than half of the urban population of the state (Fig 1). One of the major reasons for their high level of urbanization is the presence of major transportation network criss-crossing the aforesaid districts (Fig 1), caused by the spatial outgrowth

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of existing towns/cities towards the railway station (Grewal and Grewal, 2005). Fig 1 reveals that the towns and cities situated on the major transportation routes like Grand Trunk Road and major railway lines have been able to attract people towards them like magnet and more and more towns are mushrooming along these routes which include million cities like Amritsar, Ludhiana, Jalandhar and other major cities of Patiala, Mohali, Bathinda etc. Moreover, in recent years emergence of urban agglomeration along these major transportation routes have become more common. The larger towns have been found growing at the faster rate and emerging as metropolitan cities with their necessary fallout of overcrowding, crumbling infrastructure, housing problem and slums proliferation along with widening inequality (Sandhu and Teotia, 2013).

Hydro-geologically, Punjab has been divided into three major regions i.e. Malwa (south of Satluj), Doaba (between rivers Beas and Satluj), and Majha (between rivers Ravi and Satluj). The level of urbanization varies regionally too. The districts falling in Malwa and Majha regions are less urbanized part of the state. The highest concentration of urban population and urban centers lies in Doaba with around 60% of the urban population, 15% in Majha and remaining 25% in Malwa. The Malwa region of the state is agriculturally not advanced as Doaba region and the transportation network is also not so advanced. That is why, this region is least urbanized zone. Similarly, the Majha region represents to a great extent rugged topography locally called 'Kandi'. Here, lesser agricultural development and low industrial development in these areas hence, low level of urbanization.

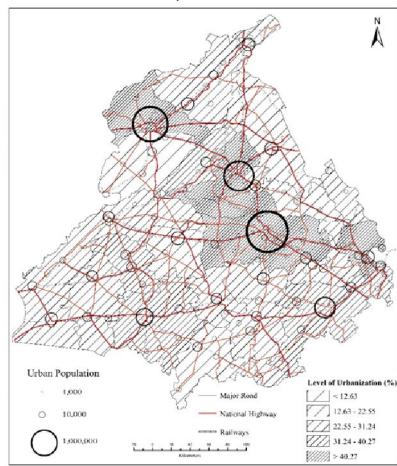


Fig 1: Spatial Distribution, Size-Class of Towns and Major Transport Route in Punjab, 2011

The districts which have low agricultural development, poor connectivity and no industrial development are less urbanized area of the state. The gap between the highly urbanized and less urbanized districts is almost three times. This high level of disparity in level of urbanization fuels migration to large urban centers in place of moving to nearby smaller urban centers thus smaller centers remain stunted or experience sluggish rate of growth and people moving to larger urban centers in Doaba region making the city planners restless in providing various basic necessities. In the process, large urban centers go on experiencing faster rate of growth and the smaller centers remain smaller or experience no in-migration at all which is new to state like Punjab.

Size-Class Distribution of Towns in Punjab between 1961 and 2011

The precondition for the faster rate of urbanization in a territory is the radical change in the occupation structure from agriculture to non-agricultural –industrial and service sector employment in urban places. The sheer increase in the number of urban places is a sign of commercialization of economic activities. As long as the number of urban centers increases, it denotes the sign of development because people are moving forward for better habitat and socio-economic environment. The size-class analysis of towns represents the health of urban system in the region or state concerned (Table 1). The analysis of size-class of towns displays a highly dispersed urbanization in the state of Punjab in 1961. During the time only 40.52% people were found living in class I(towns with population 100000 plus) towns and cities and the share of class II and class III Towns was 15.84% and 22.20% respectively. Around 21.44% people were living in towns smaller than 20000 populations. In the following decade 1971-81, market towns for agricultural produce were developed in Punjab along the railway lines as mandi for purchasing agricultural produce and exporting outside the state. But the subsequent decades experienced decline in smaller towns basically due to de-notification of Notified Area Committees by the State Government. Thus, it is clear sign of accentuation of urban dwellers towards large towns. In the subsequent decades of 2001 and 2011, the condition became clearer. The share of class I towns increased to 57.50% in 2011 and those of medium towns to 29.93% further declining from 1991. The share of smaller towns came down to all time low of 12.58%. The share of class VI towns came down below one percent meaning these towns are on the verge of dying. In 1961, the number of Class I towns was only 4 which increased to 9 during 1991, 14 during

2001 and 17 during 2011. The number of medium towns was 28 during 1961 which increased to 41 during 1991, 55 in 2001 and 72 during 2011. Though the number of medium towns increased, the population share saw a decline from last decade. The number of smaller towns was 72 in 1961 which remained almost stagnant till 1991 and experienced steep rise in the number of towns as the total number of these towns was found all time high of 139 in 2001 followed by a minor decrease of 128 in 2011 (Table 1). We all know that 2011 experienced the highest addition of census towns in the country and Punjab is not an exception to the case. Now the question arises why the urban structure of states like Punjab is distorting at the faster rate experienced never before.

Table 1: Size-Class Towns in Punjab, 1961-2011

Year	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V	Class VI
	No. (% Urban Pop.)					
1961	4 (38.25)	5 (10.15)	23 (28.11)	19 (10.44)	35 (10.38)	18 (2.67)
1971	4 (40.52)	8 (15.84)	22 (22.2)	32 (13.32)	27 (6.84)	11 (1.28)
1981	6 (46.38)	38 (14.39)	11 (20.24)	27 (11.28)	33 (6.5)	9 (1.21)
1991	9 (54.16)	18 (19.91)	23 (12.92)	47 (10.82)	16 (1.72)	8 (0.47)
2001	14 (58.38)	18 (16.45)	37 (12.5)	59 (9.82)	55 (2.52)	25 (0.33)
2011	17 (57.5)	24 (16.97)	48 (12.95)	60 (8.41)	50 (3.44)	18 (0.73)

Source: Census of India for various years

The lower order towns showed signs of stagnation and negative growth under the shadow of large towns and cities. In last four decades, out of the six categories of towns, the class I towns alone contribute more than half of the urban population of the state, which too depends upon the growth of few urban centers only. The major reasons for the faster rate of growth of these towns are the concentration of manufacturing and industrial units within these districts. This heads towards the polarization of urban population towards these first-class towns which is not a good sign. The large towns are, infrastructure wise, far superior. Probability of securing gainful employment is more in these towns and cities in comparison to smaller and medium towns. Similar is the case of educational opportunities and health facilities. Thus, if a person aspires to move to urban places nearby, he/she has certain reasons to do so and all these reasons bring him to large towns and cities as the medium towns are hardly in a position to fulfil their aspiration for which he or she aspires to migrate in urban areas. Thus, these medium and small towns are growing not by migration from rural areas but by natural growth only. The number of migrants from rural areas as well as smaller

towns are moving towards larger towns and cities. It is the main reason behind shrinking or sluggish rate of growth of smaller and medium towns, and faster and to some extent unmanageable growth of large towns and metropolitan cities. Once a town/city secures dominant position in the neighbourhood, it starts exerting influence in the neighbouring territory and gradually starts attracting people to the large centers because greater the size of settlement, higher the level of basic services and consequently more job opportunities. This perception itself is responsible for greater number of people moving to that place for stay. The inverted pyramid like situation is emerging in this state as well which is not a sign of good health. The emergence of larger towns and cities in Punjab is in central part of the state and even those large towns and cities are along the main transportation routes especially along Grand Trunk Road and main railway lines.

Conclusion-Punjab, which represented a more ubiquitous distribution of small and medium terms as on the eve of independence because of land tenurial system got abruptly altered by the success of Green Revolution, industrial development and dense transportation network. These developments resulted in the emergence of metropolitan cities in the Doaba region along major transportation routes.

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