Unit 2
Urban Centre, Urbanisation and Urban Growth

Contents

Learning Objectives

After studying this unit your should be able to:

● define the concept of urban;

● provide a definition of urban in the Indian context;

● describe some categories of towns according to the Census; and

● discuss the concept of urbanisation and urban growth.

2.1 Introduction

The previous unit, unit 1 "What is Urban Sociology?" gave you some idea about this branch of sociology. In the present unit our main purpose is to learn the concepts of urban centre, urbanisation and urban growth. It is a well-known fact that it is extremely difficult to create a complete sociological definition of above mentioned concepts. Here, our attempt would be to review various definitions related to these concepts and find out some common characteristics to understand these concepts.

2.2 Concept of Urban

The word 'urban' was hardly used in the English language before the nineteenth century. It is briefly defined by the Shorter Oxford Dictionary as 'pertaining to town or city life'. It is derived from the Latin 'urbs' a term applied by the Romans to a city—more especially the city of Rome. Urban refers to a city or town, which is directly opposite to village or country. Resident of a village is known as Folk and the city is known as Urban.

Review of Definitions

It is not possible to have a study of urbanisation unless adequate note is taken of the definition of an "urban area" or "urban centre" or city or town, which varies from country to country and from one census year to another. In Greenland, for example, a place with 300 or more inhabitants is called an urban area while in the Republic of Korea; an urban area must

have at least 40,000 inhabitants. Most European countries follow the example set by France in 1846, requiring a population minimum of 2000. Even in the same country, there are frequent modifications of the definition of "urban" which call for numerous adjustments to attain comparability over time. This, for example, was the case in the U.S.A. where a new definition of "urban" was adopted in 1950. These criteria for defining an urban area show how shaky international comparisons of the level of urbanisation based on national definitions can be in the absence of definitional adjustments (Bose, 1974).

Although urban population is widely understood to include the population resident in cities and towns, the definition of urban is, nevertheless, a complex matter. Population classified as "urban" varies greatly from one country to another. The delineation of areas as "urban or "rural" is often related to administrative, political, historical, or cultural considerations as well as demographic criteria. As the United Nation Demographic Yearbook has indicated, definitions of "urban" fall into three major types: "(1) Classification of minor civil division on a chosen criterion which may include: (a) type of local government, (b) number of inhabitants, (c) proportion of population engaged in agriculture; (2) classification of administrative centres of minor rural division as urban and the remainder of the division as rural; and (3) classification of certain size localities (agglomerations) as urban, irrespective of administrative boundaries." Even for census purposes, then, the definition of urban involves a multidimensional approach and the setting of arbitrary cutting points in differentiating "urban" from "rural". (Hauser, 1965).

2.3   Defining " Urban" in the Indian Context

In the Indian context the census definition of "town" remained more or less the same for the period 1901-51. It was only in 1961 that an attempt was made to formalise and standardize the definition by stipulating certain statistical criteria for their identification. But an interesting feature of the Indian census has been the latitude given to Census Superintendents in regard to the classification of places that fall on or around the borderline of "rural" and "urban". (Bose, 1974).

According to Census of India, 1901:

Town includes

1)   Every municipality of whatever size;

2)   All civil lines not included within municipal limits;

3)   Every other continuous collection of houses, permanently inhabited by not less than 5,000 persons, which the Provincial Superintendent may decide to treat as town for census purposes.

Thus, the primary consideration for deciding whether a particular place is a town or not is the administrative set-up and not the size of its population. Not all municipalities, civil lines areas and cantonments have a population of over 5,000 and yet these were classified as towns. At the same time, all places with a population of 5,000 and over are not necessarily towns. There are several overgrown villages with populations of over 5,000.

Further, the Census Superintendents also had the discretion to treat any place as a "town", irrespective of its administrative set-up or population size, for "special reason". This is not quite evident from the definition of "town" just quoted, for clause (3) of the definition refers to places with less than 5,000 persons as not being part of urbanfold. But it has been the census practice right from 1901 onwards to allow the discretionary power to Census Superintendents even with reference to places with population below 5,000.

The definition of "town" was thus not totally objective in as much as it was not based on a rigid statistical test. The census authorities were aware of these limitations but they preferred administrative expediency to statistical precision. (*Ibid*). However, after Independence an attempt was made to provide a very strict definition of an urban area at the 1961 Census, which is as under:

a) All places with municipality, corporation, cantonment board, or notified town area committee, etc.

b) All other places which satisfied the following criteria;

i) a minimum population of 5,000.

ii) At least 75 per cent of male working population in non-agricultural pursuits; and

iii) a density of population of at least 400 persons per sq. km.

The above definition underwent a slight change during 1981 and 1991. The urban criteria of the 1981 and 1991 Censuses varied somewhat from those of 1961 and 1971. The workers in occupations of forestry, fishing, livestock, hunting, logging, plantations and orchards, etc. (falling under Industrial Category III) were treated under non-agricultural activities in 1961 and 1971 Censuses, whereas in 1981 and 1991 Censuses these activities were treated as agricultural activities for the purpose of determining the male working population in non-agricultural pursuits. Besides, the discretion of Directors of Census in consultation with the State Government to treat some places having distinct urban characteristics as urban even if such places did not strictly satisfy all the criteria mentioned under category (b) above was discontinued at the 1991 Census and it has been followed in the 2001 Census also.

2.4 Some Categories of Towns According to the Indian Census

a) **City:** Any urban area with a population of 100,000 or more is treated as city in the Indian Census.

b) **Census Town:** Any area which satisfies the following criteria is classified as Census Town (CT) for the purpose of Census:—

i) a minimum population of 5,000.

ii) at least 75 per cent of male working population in non-agricultural pursuits; and

ii) a density of population of at least 400 persons per sq. km.

● **Urban Agglomeration (UA) and Outgrowth (OG)**

For the 1971 Census, the definition of "town" was the same as in 1961. However, the term "town group" was abandoned and instead, the expression "urban agglomeration" (UA) was used in the 1971 Census, which has been followed in the successive Censuses of 1981,1991 and 2001 also. The UA is defined as a continuous urban spread constituting a town and its adjoining urban outgrowths or two or more physically contiguous towns together with continuous well recognised urban outgrowths, if any, of such towns. Quite often, in several areas, fairly large and well-recognised localities such as railway colonies, university campuses, port areas, military campuses, etc. come up around a city or a statutory town. Though, location of all these areas falls within the revenue limits of a village or the villages, which are contiguous to the core towns, yet they deserve to be reckoned along with the town. Such localities in themselves do not qualify to be treated as individual towns in their own right and are hence treated as urban appendages of the urban centre to which they are contiguous. These are termed as outgrowths (OGs) for the purposes of the Census.

Reflection and Action 2.1

Select an area of the town/village/city with a minimum population of 5000 people. By random sampling, select every 100th person in this area. Get their names, addresses from the local post-office or telephone directory.

Find out from these 50 people (i) the nature of their occupation — agricultural or non-agricultural; (ii) level of their education; and (ii) number of members in their family and their occupations.

From the results you obtain, make a table with the above indicators. Write a report based on the analysis of this table on "My Village/ Town/City". Discuss your report with other students at your Study Centre.

2.5 Concept of Urbanisation and Urban Growth: Historical Background

The most striking feature of India's urbanisation is its long tradition. The emergence of early urban life here is associated with the evolution of the Indus Valley civilisation around 2500 B.C. (Dunbar 1951:2). Some temporal and spatial discontinuities in urban growth and spread notwithstanding, the urbanisation process diffused to other parts of the country under the impact of varied forces operating during the ancient (from early times to 1206 A.D.), medieval (1206 to 1757 A.D.) and modern (1757 A.D. till date) periods of Indian history. For that reason, India's urban pattern is a mosaic of segments belonging to the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods (Rajbala 1986; King 1976).

Despite its long urban history spanning over nearly five millennia, India remains one of the less urbanized countries of the world. When it entered the twentieth century, it was one-tenth urban; it was around one-sixth

urban at the time of Independence (Krishan and Singh 1993). During the first half of the twentieth century, the process of urbanisation was slow, registering an increase in the level of urbanisation from 10.84 to 17.29 per cent. On the other hand, the urban population increased two-and-a-half times, i.e., it increased from 25 millions to 62 millions. The latter half of the twentieth century has been the era of urbanisation in the developing countries in general, and India in particular. During this period, although the level of urbanisation in India increased from 17.29 per cent to 27.78 per cent, the total increase in urban population is about four-and-a-half times, i.e., from 62 millions to 285 millions during 1951-2001(Singh 2001). India has the second largest urban population among the countries of the world. Although there are 285 million urbanites and 35 metropolises in India as per the Census of 2001, the urban phenomena have not received due attention from sociologists. It has mainly attracted demographers, economists and geographers.

Box 2.1: Urbanisation in India

"Three-fourths of Tamil Nadu's population will live in urban areas by the end of the next two decades. So will 61% of Maharashtra, while a majority of the population in Gujarat and Punjab will be in urban areas by then.

As the world gets increasingly urban-according to Newsweek more than half of its population will be in towns and cities within a year for the first time in human history India too will be catching up with the trend, turning on its head the cliche that India lives in the villages.

According to a projection of India's population in 2026 by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner's Office, large swathes of the country will become urban..........."

Town Tale (% of urban population to total 2001-2006		
India	27.8	38.2
CTTY	SLICKERS	
Tamil Nadu	44.0	74.8
Maharasthra	42.4	61.0
Gujarat	37.4	53.0
Punjab	33.9	52.5
Karnataka	34.0	49.3
Haryana	28.9	46.3
Uttaranchal	25.7	37.3
TRULY	RURAL	
Bihar	10.5	11.6
Himanchal	9.8	13.6
Assam	12.9	19.4
Orissa	15.0	21.2
Uttar Pradesh	20.8	27.2
Jharkhand	22.2	28.8
Rajasthan	23.4	29.3

(Raghuraman, Shankar "75% of T.N. will be urban in 20 years" 8th Aug., 2006, Times of India)

Review of Definitions

Many scholars have defined urbanisation according to their own orientation and understanding. But there is a general agreement that that urbanisation is a complex socio-economic process closely connected with the scientific-technological revolution, and that it exercises a growing influence on all aspects of society's life affecting the nature of economic development, the demographic, ethnic and many social processes. As a complex many-sided process, its study requires a comprehensive approach involving many disciplines.
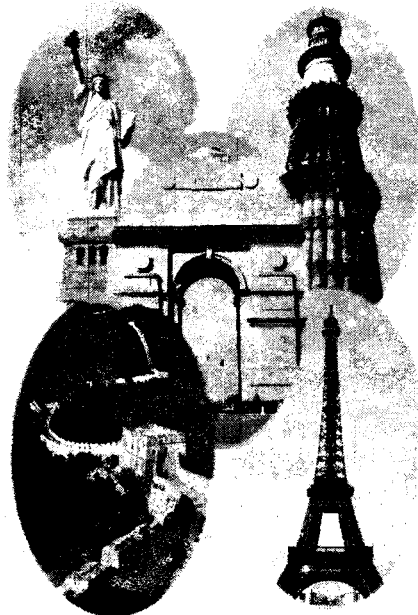
Some famous symbols of World Cities: NewYork, USA, Delhi, India, Greatwall of China, China, Eiffel Tower of Paris, France.

In the extensive literature devoted to the problem of urbanisation numerous urbanisation definition are used ranging from the terse definition determining urbanisation as a mere growth of the share of the urban population in the world, or in a particular country or region, to an overall definition according to which urbanisation is a world-historic process involving increasing concentration and intensification of human interaction and the integration of the forms of human beings activity which are becoming evermore varied. Urbanisation is understood as a stage, as a result and at the same time a pre-requisite of the progress of human interaction, all socially vital activities, and society's creative potential.

The same term is used to denote the gigantic concentration of the productive forces and social and informative activity reaching its apex in the megalopolises, and the emergence of individual urban settlements sparsely located in the vast newly-developed areas which are often distinguished by the extremely varied living conditions of the population.

Dividing the urbanisation concept in two, as proposed by Yu. L. Pivovarov, into urbanisation in the narrow sense of the word (urban growth and the increased importance of towns and cities in the life of society) and urbanisation in the broad sense of the word (a many-sided socio-economic process), does not solve the problem, although it helps to distinguish the quantitative and the qualitative sides of the process.

Let us consider some of the definitions used in literature. Part of them reflect the initial stage in the development of urban civilization: ~ mere

increase in the number of towns and in the urban population size. "Urbanisation, in the demographic sense, may be seen to indicate an increase in the proportion of urban population (U) to the total population (T) over a period of time (Bose 1974). As long as U/T increases, one would say there is urbanisation. However, theoretically it is possible that this proportion remains constant over time in situation where there is absolutely no rural to urban migration and both the rural and urban population grow at the same rate. B.S. Khorev takes the term urbanisation, as the first approximation, to mean the growing number of towns, especially large and super large cities, the increase in the share of the urban population in the country, that or in the population of the world. It is important to note here that in determining the level of the social and economic development of regions, the stress is often placed on the share of urban in the total population. Also, comparison of countries and regions using this indicator is highly conventional.

The threshold limits for classifying population in the "urban" category ranges from 200 town dwellers (Denmark, Sweden, Finland) to scores of thousands (according to the criterion of an urban community in Japan) according to censuses taken in 1960 or thereabouts. The criteria used in counts of the urban population often changes, which detracts from the reliability; of conclusion relating to its dynamics. In the former USSR in placing settlements in the town category, account was taken of both the number of its dwellers and the prevalence of non-agricultural activities among them, towns with a population of over 100,000 were usually placed in the category of cities. Towns with populations of over 500,000 fell into the category of big cities, Besides that, there is a special category of "million-plus" cities.

Data on the world growth rates of the urban population attest to an increasing intensity of urbanisation. Between 1880 and 1960 the share of the total urban population in the world rose from 3 to 33 per cent while the share of the population in big cities increased from 1.7 to 20 per cent. Now more than one of half the world population is urban. In case of India, the level of urbanisation has increased from 10.7 per cent to 27.8 per cent in last ten decades i.e. 1901 to 2001. But increase in urban population is more than 11 times i.e. 25 million to 285 million. In other words, level of urbanisation has been slow but urban growth has been fast which is clear from the increase in urban population. The second half of the 20th century has been marked by a spectacular increase in the share of large cities. During the past quarter of a century one notes significant deacceleration in urban growth, most of the developing countries including India, reporting share of urban population much below that predicted by UN Agencies.

Concentrating the more dynamic part of the population and more progressive kind of human activity, all big cities are now acting as engines of growth and development. The global cities have emerged and are dominating in the region and the world over with the economic power. "Urbanisation is characterised by movement of people from small communities concerned chiefly or solely with agriculture to other communities, generally larger, where activities are primarily centered in management, trade, manufacture or allied interests (Dudley Stamb, 1961).

> **Reflection and Action 2.2**
>
> Take any big city in India, such as, Delhi, Bombay, Chennai or Jaipur and collect as much as possible literature about its history, culture and society. Write an essay of five pages on this city and discuss it with your peers and Academic Counsellor at your Study Centre.

This characteristic feature of urbanisation gives rise to the definition of urbanisation as growth of importance of towns and cities in the life of a country or a region conditioned by social and economic progress, as the concentration of economic and cultural activities in large urban centres. A large, dense and heterogeneous population gives birth to a new socio-economic phenomenon—the urban way of life or "urbanism". It is precisely this phenomenon and its wide spread that are becoming the basic and inherent attributes of urbanisation. In the words of Berezin (1972) "Urbanisation is a complex social process accompanied by the emergence of a specific way of life, which turns the cities into the prevalent form of organisation of social activity in our century and the centuries to come".

Thus, the concept "urbanisation" implies changes:

● in the nature of people's activities;

● in the ratio between the population engaged in agricultural activities and the rest of the population;

● in the population distribution according to types of settlements;

● in the population concentration levels and the levels of concentration of human activities;

● in the shaping of the urban way of life and its growing influence on the other sections of the population.

2.6 Conclusion

Urban refers to city or town. Urban growth pertains to increase in urban population as well as increase in number of towns/cities/urban areas. Urbanisation, however, is a broader concept which encompasses urban growth also. Further, it also includes changes: in the nature of peoples activities; in the ratio between the urban and rural population; in the population distribution according to different types of towns or cities; in population concentration and levels of concentration of human activities and in modifying the urban way of life and its further impact on the other sections of society.

2.7 Further Reading

Sandhu R.S. (2003). *Urbanisation in India Sociological Contributions*, Sage, New Delhi.

Shivaramakrishan, K.C. Amitabh Kundu and B.N. Singh, (2005). *Oxford Hand Book of*

Urbanisation in India, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.