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Urbanisation is the process whereby land and inhabitants become urban. Urbanisation refers to a shift in both land use and people. Urbanisation involves (1) Concentration of people at population densities higher than those associated with agricultural population. (2) Population shift (migration) from rural to urban area. (3) Occupational shift from agricultural to non-agricultural and (4) Landuse shift from agriculture to non-agriculture. Urbanisation means that an increasing proportion of human society become townsflok, and as this takes place towns grow in the population size, spread in area and make an ever-increasing impact upon the country side, both upon its total appearance and upon the way of life of its inhabitants. Thus urbanisation is a process of the transformation of countryside landscape to townscape.

The process of urbanisation takes place when the proportion of urban population is increasing. When the rate of growth of urban population increases it brings the reproductive change in urban population. Urbanisation also increases due to re-classification of rural settlements in to urban status. But the real change in urban growth character is due to the net in-migration of rural population.

A systimatic study of urbanisation is a recent phenomena in twentieth century, especially in the developed and developing countries of the world. In India, attempts have been made to

conduct socio-economic survey in rapidly growing cities in order to understand the problems created by rapid urbanisation. Cities in India have been growing rapidly, partly because of natural growth rate and partly because of the larger influx of people from rural areas. Such crowded cities became problematic areas which attracted serious attention of planners and other scholars. Town planners have conducted specific survey in several cities, but there are very few attempts to study the trends and growth pattern of urbanisation in India.

Towns being focal points of economic, cultural, administrative and other activities play a leading part in social and economic progress. Urban growth is a most important indicator of the development of a country and its region. The study of objective tendancy of the growth of towns and urban system is an essential element of a scientific approach for regional planning.

The physio-socio-economic organisation of the study region has a great bearing on the distribution and characteristics of the rural as well as urban settlements. The economic attributes of the people always lead to the growth and development of the urban settlements. The diffusion of agricultural innovation, industrial development, and increased fabrication of transportation network have brought the significant changes in the economic structure of the region.

The growth of urban population of the region may be explained as absolute growth or percentage growth. The state of

Maharashtra has 32 millions population (1951) which has increased
to 39 millions in 1961, 50 millions in 1971, and 62 millions in
1981. The absolute growth of urban population during the period
1951-1981 indicates an increase of 12 millions e.g. 71.92 percent
growth. The decadewise urban population growth rate in Maharashtra
reveals the oscillating trends. For the year 1951-61 the growth
rate was 21.32 percent and 40.75 percent in 1961-71; however, the
growth rate has decreased by 0.76 percent in 1971-81.

The growth of urban population of the state of Maharashtra
when compared with national level, it indicates that there is loss of
urban population during the first post-independence decade (1951-
1961). The loss is - 4.02 percent. It is worthy to note that in
the second and third decade of post-independence there are gain
of 1.78 percent and 28.56 percent at national level. The trends
of gains and losses of urban population after independence shows
that there is loss of urban population at the begining, however;
in the successive decades there is considerable gain at national
level.

The state of Maharashtra tops the list with the highest
level of urbanisation (35.03 percent) among the federal state of
India (1981). So far as percentage share to India's urban
population is concerned Maharashtra rank first with the contribu-
tion of 14.06 percent in 1981. The national level of urbanisation
is 23.31 percentage.

Post-independence decadewise share of urban population
study shows that Maharashtra has a short fall of degree of
urbanisation in 1961. Since 1961 there is steadly upward
growth of urbanisation. A sharp rise in percent share of urban
population after independence is due to the economic and industrial
development in the region. Industrialization has undoubetly
accelerated the process of urbanisation by way of rapid growth of
urban population. The growth is by two ways, by rapid growth of
older cities and due to the emergence of new urban units.

The study of trend of classwise share of urban population
shows that class I towns are dominant in population size; however
the small, towns (IV,V,VI) became declined in there percent share
during the post-independence. The medium size towns (II,III)
seems stagnant in there population percent share.

The study of mean size of urban centres in different class
order during the period 1951-81 shows that the general trend of
average size of towns shows the continuous growth in mean size of
all the towns.

The districtwise net increase and percentage increase of
urban population since independence highlights that Ratnagiri
district has the lowest increase whereas Gr.Bombay district has
highest increase.

It is observed that in the study region there are three
districts namely Aurangabad, Thana and Nagpur are very rapidly

growing so far as urbanisation is concerned, however, slow urbanisation is found in the districts of Wardha, Satara, Solapur and Chandrapur. Ratnagiri is district where very low urbanisation is an experience since independence.

Generally speaking larger urban centres, though few in number, accounted for higher proportion of the urban population of the region. In 1981 there were 29 class I towns in Maharashtra; which accommadated 71.57 percent of the total urban population. The state of Maharashtra comprises three metropolitan cities viz. Bombay, Puna, Nagpur. Bombay ranking first not only in the state but also in the whole country in several spheres. The spread and level of urbanisation in the state is however not uniform. Bombay which is primate city dominats in the urban statistics and there are considerable regional disparities in the levels of urbanisation within the state.

Big cities attract the bulk of rural migrantes whose influx as a rural, plays the main part in the growth of urban population in big cities is closely related to and resulted in the growth of urban agglomeration.

The study of growth of class I cities of Maharashtra shows that in 1951 there were five class I cities with 45.47 percent share of urban population. In 1961 the number of class I cities has increased to twelve with 60.49 percent of urban population of the state of Maharashtra. There were seventeen class I

cities sharing 64.75 percent of total urban population of the state in 1971. In 1981 there were 29 class I cities sharing more than 71.00 percent urban population of the state. This clearly shows that class I cities are growing very fastly in their population size.

Growth characteristics and the status of cities when interpreted in terms of the mean growth rate during independence period, it is observed that in the study region there are two cities namely Pimpri-Chinchwad and Dombivli which are very rapidly growing cities with 96.12 percent and 79.77 percent mean growth rate respectively. These cities are essentially the industrial nucleus of the state. Slow growth rate below 30 percent is observed in the rest of six cities which are comparatively slowly growing. This slowly growing cities includes Pune, Kalyan, Bhusawal, Jalgaon, Jalana, Solapur and Ahmdnagar.

The study of rank fluctuations of cities since independence shows that Ahmadnagar city has maximum rank fluctuation in the lower rank direction. It is worth mentioning that the new industrial cities like Thana, Ulahassnagar and Aurangabad have upward trend in rank fluctuation.

The rank size distribution of cities clearly shows that the actual population of primate cities and second ranking cities is larger than expected population. The rest of cities have less actual population than the expected population. This observation is by and large similar in any part of developing countries like India.

The spatial distribution pattern of cities of Maharashtra indicates that the cities are distributed randomly where the degree of randomness is 1.17. However the degree of concentration of the cities are worth mentioning. There are seven concentration groups of cities in study area. Out of these seven groups Gr. Bombay concentration group consists of six cities. The Kolhapur concentration group includes four cities and the remaining five concentration groups shows the association of a pair of cities. Western Maharashtra region is characterised by more agglomeration of cities as compared to Marathwada and Vidharbha region of the study area.

The analytical study of class I cities in Maharashtra shows that apart from geographical conditions; population density and levels of economic development play a significant role in the distribution of cities. Bombay division has more developed as compared to the other divisions of the Maharashtra.

The state of Maharashtra has a geographical area of about 207,690 sq.kms. As per 1981 census the state has 62.78 millions population and 21.99 millions urban population. This clearly shows that region under study is essentially agricultural where 64.97 percent population is living in rural settlement and more than 1/3 population (35.03 p.c.) living in urban centres. There are 307 urban centres in Maharashtra of which 29 urban centres are classified as class I cities. The regional analysis of distribution of urban centres highlights that large number of

urban centres are concentrated along the segments of the two national urban corridors that follow the system of national highways and railways converging on Bombay. The relatively less urbanised area in the state occur in central and South Konkan; the rugged region of the Sahyadries, the Satpura and hilly areas of Chandrapur, Yavatmal, Wardha and Osmanabad regions.

The regional analysis of urban density shows a close relationship between the urban density and level of urbanisation. Higher level of urban density is found in the districts of Gr. Bombay, Thana, Wardha, Nagpur and Buldhana whereas lower level of urban density is found in the districts of Satara and Beed.

Degree of urbanisation at district level shows that in the study region highest degree of urbanisation is found in the Gr.Bombay district. It is entirely urbanised district in the state and the degree of urbanisation is 100.00 percent.

There are six districts namely Raigarh, Bhandara, Satara, Ahmadnagar, Chandrapur and Ratnagiri have degree of urbanisation less than 15 percent. The study of degree of urbanisation indicates that only four districts have level of urbanisation above the state average and the remaining districts are below the state average.

The regional analysis of the degree of urban concentration indicates that a very high concentration of degree of urbanisation

is found at Gr.Bombay district; at the other end of the scale Ratnagiri district is at the end of ranking position of the districts. For the state of Maharashtra degree of urban concentration is highest in India with 147.6 concentration index.

The study of characteristics of the distribution of the urban settlements, and levels of economic developments shows that, in addition to relief and surface confuguration, other socio-economic factors, i.e. population density and levels of economic development play a significant role in the distribution, growth, and development of urban centres.

Urban centres are widely spaced and relatively small in size are found in the area with poor level of development whereas, in highly developed area urban centres are closely spaced and comparatively larger in size.

In economically poor areas few small size urban centres have developed. Whereas, in economically prosperous region in which high level of development favours to the emergence of more urban centres with large size in the study region.

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