Urbanization in India

Urbanization means concentration of population landing to high density of population in big cities. As per the 2011 census, more than 377 million people live in urban areas. Urbanization is posing serious problems even in the advanced countries of the world. These problems are congestion, industrialization, environmental pollution, in sanitation, lack of civic amenities, bottlenecks in free flow of traffic etc.

The main reason for the growth of population in big cities is the migration of people from the villages to the cities in search of employment. Cities provide greater opportunities of employment, better living conditions and higher standard of living to the villagers. Cities also provide entertainment through the cinema, theater, television, hotels, etc. Thus, once a villager comes to the city, he never thinks of going back to his village.

Due to concentration of population, the big cities become the dens of crime and corruption. Take, for instance, U.S.A. in its big cities, a number of organized criminal gangs have come into existence.

Urbanization leads to shortage of houses in big cities. This shortage, in turn, pushes up the prices of land to astronomical heights. The pressure of population in big cities also causes haphazard growth, setting up of unauthorized colonies by unscrupulous elements, mushroom growth of juggins and creation of slums.

Urbanization creates bottlenecks in the free flow of traffic there is an unending stream of buses, trucks, tempos, scooters, motor cycles, cycles and pedestrians especially during the peak hours. Not only in metros but also in other cities, traffic jams have become a part of city life.

The Municipal authorities are not able to cope with the situation. Urbanization causes breakdown of civil services. The Municipal authorities are not in a position to provided clean drinking water to the entire population throughout the day. Supply of electricity to the people gets disrupted every now and then. The drains are not cleaned regularly.

Urbanization leads to growth in demand but shortage of supply of various commodities. Traders exploit the situation of shortage and indulge in adulteration. No one can get pure milk or pure food in big cities. This adversely affects the health of the city dwellers. The people in big cities lead a very fast and busy life. They suffer from hypertension, anxiety and fear. They hardly have any peace of mind.

Of course, urbanization has certain merits also. First, the big cities have a large number of schools and colleges for imparting education. By acquiring education, people in cities are able to gain knowledge and get gainful employment. Secondly, all big cities have well- equipped hospitals where people suffering from various disease can go for diagnosis and treatment. Thirdly, the big cities provide a wide range of means of entertainment. Fourthly, the scientific and technological progress of a country depends on its big cities because these cities possess facilities for advanced research and development.

In short, while urbanization has some merits, it has also given rise to a number of problems. In fact, the government should give concessional loans for establishing labour intensive industries so that more people can get employment in rural areas itself. Better educational facilities should be provided so that people living in rural areas do not move to cities in order to take education. This will go a long way to stop the urbanization. If rural people are provided better living condition like supply of fresh water, road connecting villages with cities, electricity, etc. then there is no reason why urbanization cannot be stopped. The government is trying its best to develop satellite towns around metropolitan cities to avoid congestion and pollution in the big cities.

India might be adding to its number of billionaires but slum population in urban cities is increasing rapidly with nearly one third of the urban population being poor. An independent study by NGO urban Health Resource Center (UHRC) has found that nearly 30 % or 90 million people living in urban areas are poor and according to UNHABITAT, the number likely to touch 200 million in 2020.

 By 2030, an estimated 5 billion of the world's 8.1 billion people will live in cities. About 2 billion of them will live in slums, primarily in Africa and Asia, lacking access to clean drinking water and working toilets, surrounded by desperation and crime. Already their slums are huge according to Mike Davis, author of Planet of Slums, nearly 80 % of Nigeria's urban population or some 41.6 million people, and live in slums. The comparable numbers in India are 56% and 158.4 million. Many of these slum dwellers are also squatters, lacking leases or legal title to their homes.