



A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF INCREASING URBANISATION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

As of 2025, India stands at a demographic crossroads, with 63.13% of its 1.463 billion people residing in rural areas and 36.87% in urban centers. This study examines the multifaceted drivers of urbanization—ranging from agrarian distress to educational aspirations—and analyzes the sociological impacts on migrant identity, family dynamics, and environmental sustainability. Drawing on qualitative studies in Northern India and Rajasthan, this paper argues that while urbanization offers economic mobility, it simultaneously triggers complex identity negotiations and severe infrastructure and ecological strain.

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE DEMOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE OF 2025

The narrative of "two Indias"—one of vibrant, tech-driven cities and the other of serene, agriculture-dependent villages—is being rewritten by rapid urban expansion. Projections from the NITI Aayog suggest that by 2030, more than 40% of the population will reside in urban areas.

However, this urbanization is highly unequal across geographies. For instance, Himachal Pradesh remains 90% rural due to its challenging mountainous terrain, which favors small village communities over large-scale urban infrastructure. Conversely, the capital city-state of Delhi is 90% urbanized, serving as a magnet for migrants seeking commercial and government employment. Other states, such as Bihar, exhibit a "sluggish" pace of urbanization at only 12%, reflecting a continued, heavy dependence on traditional farming.

2. DRIVERS OF URBANIZATION: THE PUSH AND PULL FRAMEWORK

The movement from rural communities to urban centers is driven by a complex interplay of systemic "push" factors and aspirational "pull" factors.

2.1 Push Factors: Rural Distress and Agrarian Crisis For many, migration is not a choice of lifestyle but a critical survival strategy.

- Shrinking Landholdings: The average farm size has plummeted from 1.08 hectares in 2016-17 to just 0.74 hectares in 2021-22, making traditional agriculture increasingly unviable for the average family.

- Climate and Ecology: Erratic monsoon patterns and environmental degradation have made agricultural productivity unpredictable. In Rajasthan, harsh climatic conditions and low productivity are primary drivers of rural flight.
- Infrastructure Gaps: Rural areas, particularly in states like Bihar, continue to struggle with inadequate healthcare and educational facilities, forcing residents to look toward cities for basic social resources.

2.2 PULL FACTORS: THE URBAN MAGNET

- Economic Opportunity: Urban areas are the engines of India's growth, currently contributing 63% to the national GDP, a figure expected to reach 80% by 2050.
- Social and Educational Aspirations: Qualitative studies in Northern India highlight that while employment is the primary driver, educational aspirations are increasingly shifting migration patterns from seasonal labor to long-term relocation.
- Connectivity: Migration intensity is notably higher in villages located closer to district headquarters or urban centers due to better transportation links.

3. SOCIOLOGICAL IMPACTS ON MIGRANTS AND FAMILIES

Urbanization is more than a demographic shift; it is a profound sociological transformation affecting identity and social structures.

3.1 Identity Negotiation and Cultural Adjustment Migrants

often face a "complex negotiation of identity". They must balance the preservation of rural traditions with the necessity of adapting to urban lifestyles. This often results in a self-perception where economic gains are weighed against significant social and cultural losses.

3.2 FAMILY DYNAMICS AND EMOTIONAL STRESS THE IMPACT ON THE RURAL HOUSEHOLD IS DUAL-EDGED:

- Remittances: Migration significantly improves rural living standards through increased income and remittances.
- Emotional Strain: Conversely, the separation causes intense emotional stress, family strain, and a disruption of traditional social support networks.
- 3.3 Social Mobility and Gender Migration patterns are becoming more diverse. While historically male-driven for employment, there is a growing trend of female migration. Although many women migrate due to marriage, an increasing number are moving for education and independent employment. Furthermore, social mobility varies by community; for example, members of traditional desert tribes in Rajasthan experience higher upward mobility when they transition to non-traditional urban occupations.

4. CHALLENGES OF RAPID URBAN EXPANSION

The speed of urbanization has outpaced the capacity of urban governance, leading to several crises.

4.1 The Infrastructure and Housing Deficit India currently faces a shortage of 10 million affordable homes, a deficit projected to triple by 2030. This leads to the proliferation of "urban ghettos" and overcrowded slums where living conditions are often as precarious as the rural poverty the migrants fled.

4.2 Environmental Degradation in Biodiversity Hotspots Urbanization is taking a devastating toll on India's ecologically fragile zones:

- The Himalayas: Regional urbanization in the Western Himalayas has seen an "outrageous" 184% increase. This has resulted in an 11% decline in forest cover and a 35% depletion of natural springs, increasing the region's vulnerability to flash floods and landslides.
- The Western Ghats: Interior forests have declined by 10% due to infrastructure expansion and urbanization, disrupting catchment areas essential for regional water security.

4.3 Urban Health and Inequality The "Urban Heat Island" effect has made cities significantly hotter than surrounding rural areas, increasing electricity demand and posing health risks to the poor. Additionally, 90% of the urban workforce is employed in the informal sector, lacking social security and stable wages.

5. POLICY FRAMEWORK AND SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES

To manage this transition, India has adopted several modernization missions, though experts argue for more integrated approaches.

- Modernization Missions: Programs like the Smart Cities Mission (SCM), AMRUT, and PMAY-U aim to improve infrastructure and quality of life. As of 2025, over 8,000 projects have been completed under SCM.
- Sustainable Models: Planners advocate for the "Sponge Cities" model to manage urban floods and the creation of satellite towns to de-congest mega-cities.
- Fiscal Decentralization: A key recommendation is to empower Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) with greater revenue autonomy, allowing cities to fund their own infrastructure through municipal bonds and better tax collection.

6. CONCLUSION

The increasing urbanization of rural India is an inevitable structural shift driven by the transition from agriculture to services and industry. However, the sociological data indicates that this progress comes at a high cost to migrant well-being and ecological stability. Future policy must move beyond mere infrastructure development toward people-centric urban planning that addresses social equity, emotional well-being, and climate resilience.

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