

# ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES OF URBAN AREAS AND WELLNESS

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**Abstract:** Urban areas are centres for business, Science, industry and culture .These are said to be centres for consumption rather than production. Employment, prosperity and better life pull the people to towns and cities. By 2050 two thirds of Worlds population are expected to live in urban areas. This leads to environmental implications like air, land, water degradation. Urban areas around the world mostly face the problems of Population growth, shortage of amenities, greenhouse gasses, urban haze, congestion, noise, poor housing , etc.,. The present paper aims to provide an overview of the environmental problems of urban areas and suggest some remedial measures.

**Keywords:** Environmental implications, Population growth, urban areas.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Urban areas are considered as the cradles of human civilization and culture. These are also considered as centres for consumption and products of emissions, solid waste/garbage and sewage because population in urban centres is growing day by day not only in India but also all over the world. According to 2011 Census India's Urban population is 377 Million and world is 3.6 Billion. The proportion of urban population raised from 28%-31.16% during 2001-2011 Census, while the proportion of rural population declined from 72.19% to 68.84%. This rapid urban population growth exert more pressure on environment. In developing countries like India, natural population increase and rural to urban migration are significant factors in the growth of towns/ cities. The natural increase is caused by improved medical felicities, better sanitation and improved food supplies, and cause population to grow, where as migration caused by poverty drives people from the rural to urban areas to search of employment, food, shelter and education. In rural areas, people become victims of unpredictable weather conditions like drought and floods, which can affect their livelihood. Due to this many formers from villages move to cities in search of jobs and other facilities. In contrast, cities offer job opportunities and other services and are known to be centres where wealth and money are centralized. Educational institutions and more industries are located in cities. This leads to many environmental issues in cities.

## II. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are (1) to discuss the environmental problems of urban areas and (2) to suggest some remedial measures.

## III. URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Urban Environmental issues are harmful effects of mankind on the biophysical environment. Environmental degradation, pollution, climate change, noise from traffic or neighbours, congestion, shortage of basic amenities, health problems etc., are some environmental problems in urban areas. These urban areas have their characteristic problems such as explosive increases in population, gross inadequacy of infrastructural facilities and services, overcrowding and traffic congestion, crumbling old city centres, neighbourhood degradation, etc. they are also congested, chaotic and squalid. At the same time they provide better employment opportunities, higher income levels, better education, health and social services Various types of problems like shortage of housing and sanitation, growth and expansion of slums, environmental pollution, urban poverty, lack of pure drinking water, unemployment, poor public transport, improper treatment of sewage, uncollected solid waste, etc. are at present we are facing due to urbanization., These urban problems are not all of recent making and becoming threats to people's present /future wellbeing. Some important environmental problems in urban areas are discussed below:

### a. Solid waste

Urban areas consume large quantities of materials and release a lot of garbage. It include domestic, municipal and industrial solid waste etc. Stagnation of solid wastes in many days release poisonous gases with pungent smell causes different vector diseases.

### b. Depletion of natural resources

The consumption of natural resources is very high in urban areas. Shortage of Electricity, drinking water, Space etc., noticed due to over exploitation of natural resources.

### c. Destruction of Habitats

A lot of agricultural and forest lands are decreasing due to expansion of towns and cities. Usually the forest areas would have been habitats to many animals and birds.

**d. Water pollution**

Ground water contamination will be occurred due to sewage obtained from domestic, commercial and industrial buildings. Water containing lead, sometimes caused by the lead pipes used in older construction, can cause serious damage to the brain, kidneys, nervous system and red blood cells. Chemicals, gasoline, oil and road salts get into the groundwater and become unsafe and for human use.

**e. Air pollution**

Most of the urban areas are prone to air pollution due to automobiles, industries and human induced activities. Automobiles emit gases like carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, hydrocarbons, oxides of Nitrogen and Sulphur, toxic substances as fine particles and vapors of organic compounds. There are more adverse effects of these pollutants on wellness and environment. Ozone is a concern of air pollution which damage in the upper atmosphere. Chloro-Floro carbons are responsible for ozone depletion. Fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-gases) are powerful greenhouse gases that trap heat in the atmosphere and contribute to global warming.

**f. Sound pollution**

Sound is unwanted noise that has become a part of urban life. Sound in urban areas produced due to automobiles, social functions industries etc. cause sound/noise pollution. This pollution causes psychological and physical health hazards. . Noise can increase stress, which over the long period can lead to heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke etc.

**g. Rise in Temperature**

Temperature increases drastically in urban areas due to unplanned construction of apartments and large buildings. These buildings absorb and emit solar radiation which causes many health problems.

**h. Growth of Slums**

Rapid growth of urbanization and industrialization has resulted the growth and spread of slums. These are densely populated areas where living conditions are not good and houses are congested. The expansion of slums happens due to a large migration of rural population to urban areas for employment, lack of developed land and high prices of land for housing.

**IV.URBANIZATION IN INDIA**

Globally more people live in urban areas than in rural areas. In 1950 30% and in 2014 54% of world population was urban. By 2050, 66% of the world population is projected to be urban. India's urban population has gained from 25.9 Millions in 1901 to 377 Millions in 2011, and projected to 432.6 Millions in 2021, Whereas total population has increased from 238.39 Millions in 1901 to 1210.2 Millions in 2011, estimated to 1339.74 Millions in 2021. Although the urban population attained more than 14 fold increase but the total population by 5 times only over a century (1901-2011). It shows a gradual increasing trend of urbanization (Table .1).

**Table1: Trends of Urbanization in India**

Census Year	Population in million			% Urban population	Annual exponential growth rate of urban population	No. of urban centres/Towns
	Total	Rural	Urban			
1901	238.4	212.5	25.9	10.8	--	1,917
1911	252.1	226.2	25.9	10.3	0.04	1909
1921	251.3	223.2	28.1	11.2	0.8	2047
1931	279.0	245.5	33.5	12.0	1.7	2219
1941	318.7	274.5	44.2	13.8	2.8	2424
1951	361.1	298.7	62.4	17.3	3.5	3059
1961	439.2	360.3	78.9	18.0	2.4	2700
1971	548.2	439.1	109.1	19.9	3.3	3126
1981	683.3	523.9	159.4	23.3	3.8	4029
1991	846.3	628.7	217.6	25.7	3.1	4689
2001	1028.6	741.7	287.6	28.0	2.7	5161
2011	1210.2	833.1	377.1	31.2	2.8	7935
2021*	1339.7	432.6	907.1	20.86	2.5	--

**Source:** Census of India (1981, 1991&2011). \*Population Projections for India, 2001-26, Registrar General of India, 2006.

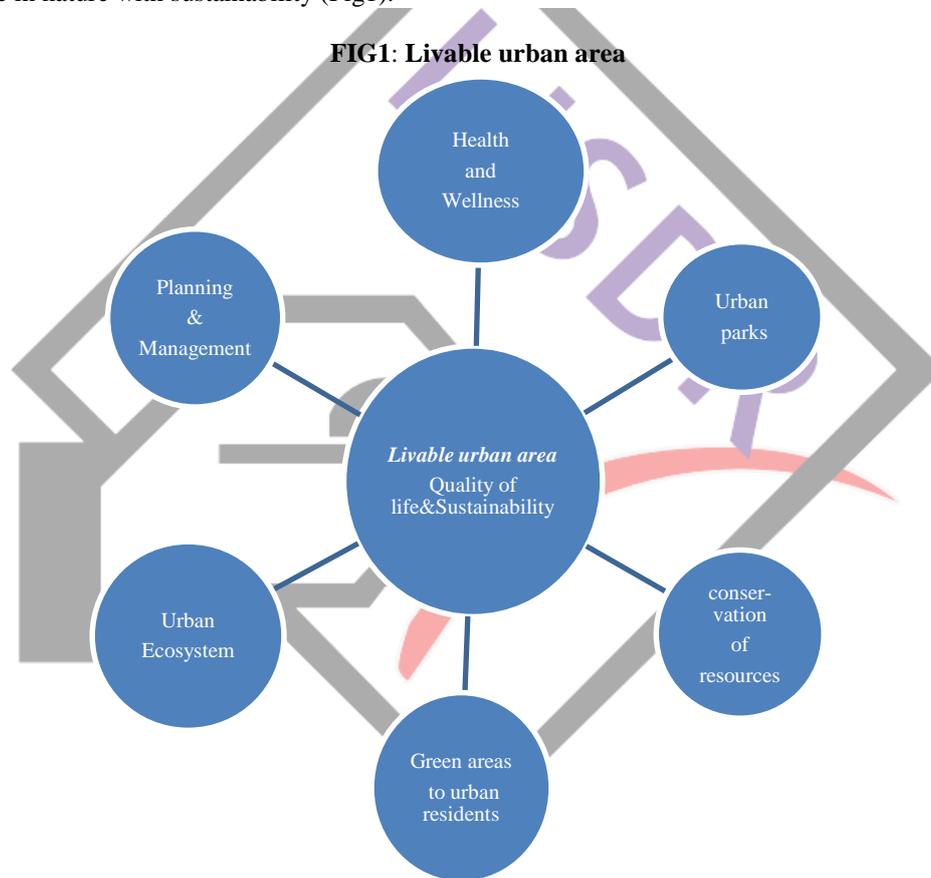
From the above table it is clear that urban population increases rapidly from 1901-2011 which increases environmental problems.

## V. WELLNESS

The term wellness emerged after the World War II because of changing societies health needs. Wellness is not a luxury but a right for all human beings. It is a state of well-being physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally with good habits that adopt from our childhood. Myers et al (2005, P.252) define wellness as being “a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being in which body, mind and spirit are integrated by the individual to live more fully within the human and natural community”. It is an individual journey to discover our self and find the balance in body, mind and soul and seen as the absence of negative elements such as illness and disease but also the presence of positive elements like physical health and happiness.. There are seven dimensions to define wellness. These are physical wellness, psychological/emotional wellness, intellectual wellness, social wellness, spiritual wellness, occupational wellness and environmental wellness. Here in this context we mentioned environmental wellness.

Environmental wellness refers to include our relationship to the surroundings which we are living and working. It is nothing but trying to live in harmony with the Earth by understanding the impact of our interaction with nature and our personal environment, and taking action to protect the world around us. May (2007) define environmental wellness to include the balance between home and work life as well as the individual’s relationship with nature and community. Protecting our self from environmental hazards and minimizing the negative impact of our behavior on the environment are key factors. Environmental wellness includes, Physical, Chemical, Biological, Social and cultural environment.

City planning and local planning can have positive effect on environmental wellness due to development of green spaces. Maintaining optimal living conditions that help to protect nature encourage and support sustainable living process. Building a future in which humans live in nature with sustainability (Fig1).



## VI. SUGGESTIONS

Environmental issues need to be addressed through, environmental education, advocacy and activism. We need to understand the scale of urban environmental problems, from the micro to the macro. Counter urbanization is also needed. Policy should relate to proper urban planning / master planning where city planning will consist of operational, developmental and restorative planning. Proper implementation of such plans is crucial in the regulated development of urban areas, which in turn have resulted in mushrooming of slums and squatters, unauthorized and haphazard development and above all environmental degradation and transportation problems within and around the urban areas. Increase urban parks and greenery for better health as it promotes natural cooling.

Further, the development plans / master plans are mostly documents prepared with limited forecasting capabilities without capturing the entire dynamics and are generally not responsive to dynamic problems and responsive to policy changes. It is therefore necessary to enable the administrators and planners to graduate and equip with better understanding, methods and tools to tackle the

environmental issues of urban areas. Studies are also essential to understand growth of slums, slum population and their quality of life.

## VII.CONCLUSION

Urbanization is an indicator of socio-economic development and modernization; or can also become the cause of several problems. The urban problems are not all of recent making. In India the urban situation had become serious because of the large increase in population since 1921. The growth of cities in India has been haphazard and largely unplanned. These urban areas have their characteristic problems such as explosive increases in population, gross inadequacy of infrastructural facilities and services, overcrowding and traffic jams, crumbling old city centres, neighbourhood degradation, expansion of slums etc. Our cities are a mixture of splendour and squalor. They provide better employment opportunities, higher income levels, better education, health and social services. At the same time, they are also congested, chaotic and squalid. Various types of problems like shortage of housing and sanitation, growth of slums, environmental pollution, urban poverty, lack of pure drinking water, unemployment, traffic congestion, poor public transport, improper treatment of sewage, uncollected solid waste, etc. are at present we are facing due to urbanization. These problems cannot be tackled without the joint endeavour of the local elected bodies and a conscious group of city people acting through the NGOs and other institutions at the local level. Inequality in access to services, housing, land, education, health and employment opportunities within cities have socio-economic, environmental and political repercussions, including rising violence, urban unrest, environmental degradation, and underemployment, which threaten to diminish any gains in income and poverty reduction. Urban policy formulation and implementation have never received the attention they deserve from the highest policy-making levels in India.

The problem of pollution is more severe in big cities. The contamination of water and rising level of toxins in almost all major rivers of India due to heavy disposal of sewage wastes, excreta and chemical wastes. Fairly high rate of urbanization coupled with a low rate of investment in urban development, in the public as well as the private sector, are responsible for a serious deficiency in the availability of infrastructure and basic amenities. According to Urbanization report of World Bank only 58 % of urban population of India has access to improved sanitation facilities. If Job opportunities are productive and lead to gainful employment, urbanization becomes a means of economic development otherwise it is merely a process of transfer of rural poverty to an urban environment.

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