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CONTRIBUTION OF MIGRATION IN GROWTH OF MAJOR URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Universally, urban agglomeration symbolizes the rapid expansion of the modern urban world. In reshaping the demographic and spatial landscapes of urban agglomeration, migration plays a significant role. Most developing countries have evidence of a faster increase in urban agglomeration. India, like the most divergent regional divisional country, has different characteristics of urban centers. Where some cities developed in the early period, but some cities have developed in recent times. At the same time, metro cities have a unique way of growing and experiencing growth. This study investigates the nature of migration in the growth of major urban agglomerations in India, focusing on Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, and Bangalore. Drawing on data from the Census of India 2011, the research analyzed decadal population growth, migration origin (rural vs. urban), inter- and intra-state migration patterns, duration of residence, and reasons for migration. The findings reveal that Delhi and Bangalore have experienced the highest growth rates due to inter-state migration driven by employment opportunities and economic liberalization. In contrast, Kolkata shows slower growth, rooted in longer-term, intra-state migration patterns. Notably, Chennai and Bangalore receive a higher proportion of urban-origin and skilled migrants, reflecting a shift toward knowledge-based urban economies. Meanwhile, Mumbai and Delhi continue to attract rural-origin populations, reinforcing their status as industrial and administrative hubs. This paper examines the critical role of migration in shaping India's urban agglomerations and highlights the necessity for inclusive planning frameworks that address regional disparities and foster balanced urban growth.

Keywords: Urban Agglomeration, Migration, Urban Growth, India

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, urbanization has accelerated, with the number of million cities crossing 400, mostly concentrated in the developing world, indicating rapid expansion in both population and spatial extent Angel et al. (2005), Cohen (2004). This rapid growth of the urban population can be ascertained from the fact that in 1950, around 30% of the population lived in urban areas, which increased to 55%

in 2018; it is projected that nearly 70% of the global population will live in urban in 2050 United Nations. (2019).

The process of urbanization has divergent trends across different parts of the world. A geographical shift in global urbanization is observed as the process of urbanization has nearly slowed in the developed world against the growth they observed throughout the Industrial Revolution during the 19th and early 20th centuries Seto et al. (2013). In contrast, rapid urbanization has occurred in developing countries where only 18% of the population lived in urban areas during the mid-20th century, but it has now increased to 40% Zhang (2016). This shift can be noticed in the emergence of a number of megacities across developing nations that surpass those of the developed world Jedwab and Vollrath (2015). Besides, rapid economic development across the developing world has immensely led to the emergence of major urban centers that have shifted the rural population towards urban areas.

Urbanization has emerged as an inevitable structural transformation in the developing world as a result of the changing economic and social landscape of cities, emerging as centers of productivity and diverse opportunities, attracting rural populations in pursuit of livelihood beyond agriculture. Besides, the intensifying mechanization and technological advancements in agriculture have reduced the demand for labor in rural areas, thus pushing rural-urban migration flows Chauvin et al. (2017), Zhang (2016).

The urbanization process has advanced gradually but consistently over the years. Merely 25.8 million people dwelled in urban areas all over the country during the year 1901. At that time, this was 10.8% of the entire population. Throughout the progression of both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this number underwent a progressive but consistent augmentation until it reached 286 million people back in 2001, establishing 27.8% of the population. In 2011, the urban population expanded to a greater extent, up to 377 million, and came to represent 31.11% of the overall national population. The gradual yet continuous expansion of urban settlements in India, driven by a measured increase in urbanization, has been significantly influenced by the decline in rural population growth observed between 2001 and 2011, which in turn has contributed to the proportional rise in the urban population and the broader transformation of the country's demographic landscape Bhagat (2018), Bhagat and Mohanty (2009). As economic reforms liberalized the Indian economy through 1991, urban growth ascended greatly, impelled by industrial expansion, a growth of foreign investment occurred, infrastructure developed further, new economic opportunities generated additional employment; several people migrated from rural areas to urban ones, as well as urban infrastructure modernized Kundu (2011).

The growth of urban areas in any country is a function of four components contributing towards change in the urban population. These are natural increase, net migration to urban areas, reclassification of settlements into urban, and the redefining or extension of the boundaries of the existing urban centers and towns Bhagat and Mohanty (2009). Among these components, migration has played a crucial role in shaping urban growth, especially in developing countries, due to the underlying structural inequalities between urban and rural areas Todaro (1969). Besides, with a fall in fertility, migration is likely to have an increasing share in urban growth across various developing countries across the world Chandrasekhar and Sharma (2015). In India, the 2011 census revealed that millions of individuals migrated to urban areas within the country, substantially impacting the expansion of urban centres (Census of India, 2011). The steady influx of migrants contributes

not only to the labour force but also to the social and cultural vibrancy of the urban areas Triandafyllidou et al. (2024).

Urban agglomeration, defined as the clustering of interconnected cities and towns around a central urban core, has emerged as a critical area of research within urban studies Fang and Yu (2017). Analyzing dynamics within urban agglomeration aids our comprehension of urban expansion, spatial organization, and economic integration patterns. This examination of urban agglomeration, as a distinct dimension that urbanization possesses, concentrates particularly on the specific role of migration in the shaping of India's linked urban landscapes. Urban agglomerations present contemporary cities' complex, networked nature as they comprehensively assess spatial and functional integration, require infrastructure and pose a challenge to governance using a valuable framework. This research situates migration inside this model. In doing so, this investigation attempts to much more comprehensively grasp just how population mobility influences the structure, as well as sustains India's urban expansion.

This study concentrates on the urban agglomeration of Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, and Bangalore, which were selected specifically due to their vital role in shaping the country's urbanization patterns and migration dynamics since they happen to be India's largest and most dynamic metropolitan regions. Mumbai serves as the financial capital, Delhi as the political and administrative center, Kolkata features rich historical as well as cultural heritage, Chennai is an industrial and IT hub, and Bangalore is a universally known technology and innovation center: each of these cities acts as a critical node within India's economic, political, and socio-cultural landscape. Considering the spatial and functional integration regarding migration-driven urban expansion is optimal due to their discrete yet linked urban growth pathways. These trajectories furnish a structure in order to achieve that. Furthermore, these urban centers encounter exigent infrastructure, lodging, and ecological viability predicaments. Thus, they constitute valuable instances for evaluating the broader ramifications of accelerated urban expansion. India's complex, as well as heterogeneous, urban construction has a representative model that offers diverse regional, economic, and cultural characteristics. This research attempts to furnish an understanding for policymakers, urban planners, and further stakeholders that will advise strategies so they can sustainably cultivate urban areas, successfully conduct migration flows, and curtail challenges when urban growth accelerates.

2. DATA SOURCE

This study is based on the Census of India 2011, conducted by the Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. The census provides comprehensive demographic, social, and economic information at various geographical levels across the country. For this study, data on urban agglomerations, migration patterns, population growth, and reasons for migration were extracted and analyzed to understand the role of migration in the growth of major urban centers in India.

The following datasets are used in this study:

1) **Population Tables:** Providing decadal growth rates for urban agglomerations between 1991-2011.
2) **Migration Tables:** explaining rural and urban origin migration, intra-state and inter-state migration, duration of residence, and reasons for migration.

3) **Urban Agglomeration Tables:** Offering insights into spatial clustering and demographic trends in cities.

The analysis is based on data aggregated and computed by the authors to explore the contribution of migration to urban growth dynamics in major Indian urban agglomerations, namely Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, and Bangalore.

3. RESULT

The population trends from 1991 to 2011 show meaningful urban growth patterns in India's largest cities. Bangalore emerged as simultaneously fast-growing city, showing growth rates of 38.04% (1991-2001) and 49.44% (2001-2011). Conversely, Mumbai and Delhi large growth noticeably decreased from a rate of 30.47% and 52.96 % (1991-2001) to a rate of 11.93% and 26.96% (2001-2011). Such a prominent decrease is evident. On the other hand, Kolkata showed a notably smaller increase, especially at about 19.81% and around 6.87%. Chennai had steady increases, at rates of 20.99% as well as 32.56% Table 1.

Table 1

Table 1 Decadal Population Growth of Major Urban Agglomerations in India (1991–2011)

UA/ Population	1991-2001	2001-2011
Mumbai UA	30.47	11.93
Delhi UA	52.96	26.96
Kolkata UA	19.81	6.87
Chennai UA	20.99	32.56
Bangalore UA	38.04	49.44

Source Author's Computation Was Done Using Census Data From 1991 To 2011

The 2011 Census data provide residential patterns of migrant origins across five major Indian urban agglomerations. Delhi UA and Mumbai UA received a significant proportion of rural-origin migrants, with 62.69% and 51.80%. In contrast, southern metros like Chennai UA (75.57% urban-origin) and Bangalore UA (64.15% urban-origin) received dominance of urban-origin migration Table 2.

Table 2

Table 2 Distribution of Migrant Population by Rural and Urban Origin in Major Urban Agglomerations, India, 2011

City/Migrant	Rural	Urban
Mumbai UA	51.80	48.20
Delhi UA	62.69	37.31
Kolkata UA	35.35	64.65
Chennai UA	24.43	75.57
Bangalore UA	35.85	64.15

Source Author's Computation Was Done Using Census Data for 2011.

The 2011 Census data also showed different migration patterns across major urban agglomerations in India, with significant differences in the proportion of intra-state and inter-state migrants. Delhi UA received 90.60% of migrants from inter-state, while Mumbai UA has received a balanced migration flow, with 53.36% intra-state and 46.64% inter-state migrants Table 3.

Table 3

Table 3 Distribution of Migrant Population by Intra-State and Inter-State Origin in Major Urban Agglomerations, India, 2011.

City/Migrant	Intra-State (%)	Inter-State (%)
Mumbai	53.36	46.64
Delhi	9.4	90.6
Kolkata	79.86	20.14
Chennai	88.09	11.91
Bangalore	64.47	35.53

Source Author's Computation Was Done Using Census Data for 2011.

In respect, Chennai UA (88.09% intra-state) and Kolkata UA (79.86% intra-state) experienced more intra-state migration, and Bangalore UA, while predominantly intra-state (64.47%), also received a share of inter-state migrants (35.53%) Table 3.

Table 4

Table 4 Distribution of Migrant Population by Duration of Residence in Major Urban Agglomerations, India, 2011

City/Migrant	10 Years & Above	5-9 Years	1-4 Years	Less than 1 Year
Mumbai	60.01	16.62	18.37	5.00
Delhi	61.37	17.84	16.60	4.19
Kolkata	65.23	15.51	15.38	3.88
Chennai	50.34	18.51	24.39	6.76
Bangalore	43.27	22.41	27.70	6.62

Source Author's Computation Was Done Using Census Data for 2011.

Table 4 shows that the 2011 Census of India provides variations in the duration of residence among migrants across major urban agglomerations. Kolkata UA contains the highest proportion of longer-term migrants due to the fact that 65.23% have dwelled there for a duration of 10 years and above. A preponderance of long-term migrants is additionally exhibited via Delhi UA (61.37%) and Mumbai UA (60.01%) as well. In contrast, Chennai UA, as well as Bangalore UA, southern cities, underwent a higher share regarding recent migrants, with 6.76% and 6.62% having migrated in a period of less than a year ago, respectively. Chennai also features the uppermost fraction of migrants dwelling during 1–4 years (24.39%). Bangalore has a leading percentage (22.41%) in the 5–9 years bracket.

Table 5

Table 5 Distribution of Migrants by Reasons for Migration in Major Urban Agglomerations, India, 2011

City/ Migrant	Work /employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved after birth	Moved with household	Others
Mumbai	26.12	1.28	1.18	17.13	8.52	24.81	20.96
Delhi	28.73	0.72	1.45	18.34	2.59	35.09	13.08
Kolkata	12.15	2.27	0.91	23.87	7.68	24.87	28.24
Chennai	17.45	0.83	1.86	12.57	7.66	29.04	30.58
Bangalore	28.18	1.86	2.75	14.25	4.29	20.92	27.74

Source Author's Computation Was Done Using Census Data for 2011.

Table 5 from the 2011 Census shows the various reasons for migration across major urban agglomerations in India. Work or employment was a primary driver in Delhi UA (28.73%) and Bangalore UA (28.18%), while Mumbai UA followed closely at 26.12%. Marriage is a significant reason for migration in Kolkata UA (23.87%) and Delhi UA (18.34%). Migrants in Chennai UA and Bangalore UA also showed higher proportions of migrating for education (1.86% and 2.75%, respectively). Moved with household is a prominent factor in Delhi UA (35.09%) and Chennai UA (29.04%), while other reasons are a significant category in Chennai UA (30.58%) and Bangalore UA (27.74%).

Urban agglomerations such as Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore have received more inter-state migrant populations. Correspondingly, Kolkata and Chennai have witnessed a migrant population, mostly from surrounding states. Mumbai mainly received migrants from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, as well as Rajasthan, while Delhi's continuous urban expansion is greatly influenced by migration from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Punjab, along with Haryana. In Bangalore, migration is not limited to surrounding states such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Furthermore, migration also includes a good number of migrants from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, Rajasthan. In respect of Kolkata and Chennai UAs, surrounding states are playing great to increase

Figure 1

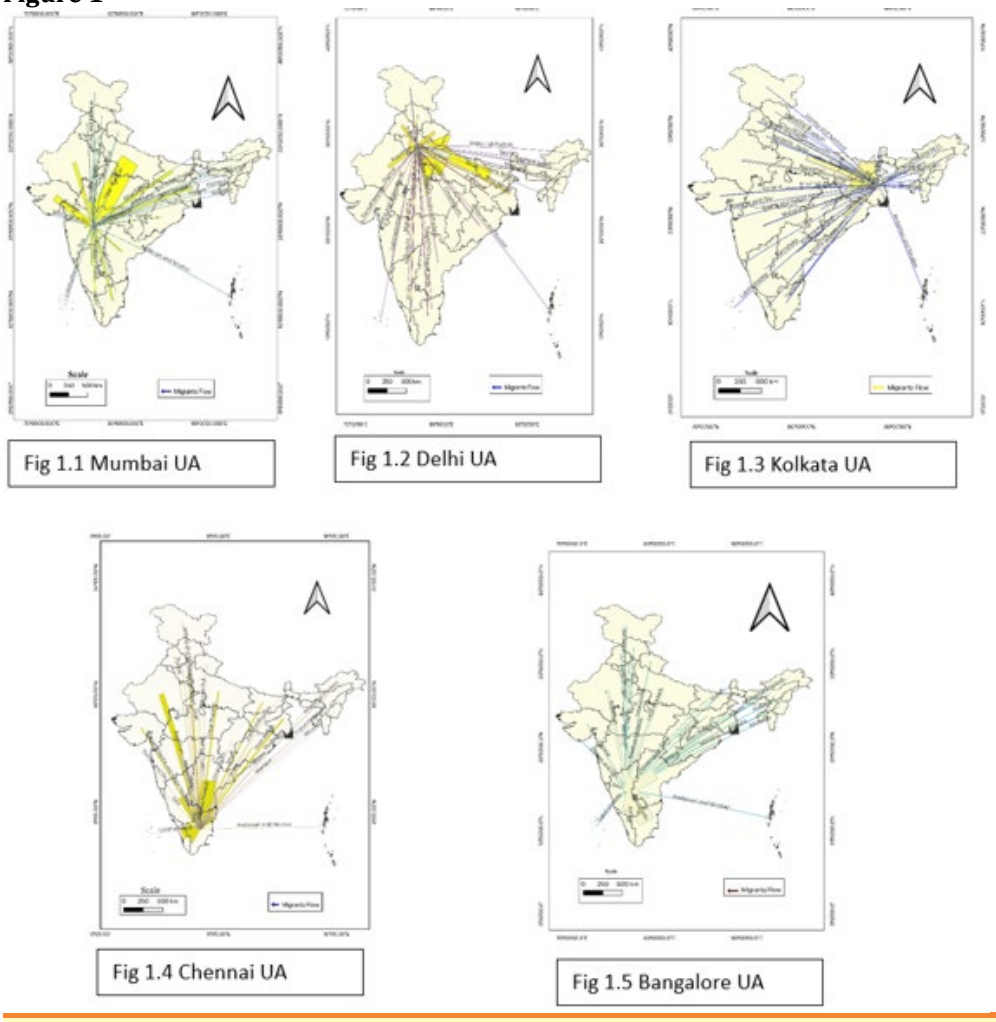

Figure 1 Migration Flow Map to Particular Urban Agglomeration

urban population. Conversely, Kolkata's migrant population largely originates from Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, while Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka serve as key contributors to Chennai's urban growth. Figure 1

4. DISCUSSION

There is a specific relationship between human migration and development in any world region. People migrate to meet their basic needs or to increase their standard of living, which is mostly influenced by the many urban areas in a country or nation Bhagat and Mohanty (2009), Strozza et al. (2016), Wang et al. (2020). Our study explains human migration trends related to the growth of major urban agglomerations in India. Delhi and Bangalore exemplify the trends of the fastest-growing cities in India, whereas Kolkata experienced the lowest growth from 1991 to 2011. This is attributed to the effects of globalization and urban economic growth through the information and communication technology (ICT) sector, and Delhi UA emerged as a significant agglomeration of the Export Processing Zone, which provides a new opportunity for the Indian and Asian populations to migrate to these urban areas for better jobs. While UA, like Kolkata, is lagging behind all these developments after economic liberalization in 1990 Abhishek et al. (2017), Dupont (2011), Narayana (2011). The origin of the place of residence of migrants shows that Delhi UA and Mumbai UA received more rural origin. The UAs like Delhi and Mumbai are known as the commercial and industrial hubs (Auto-Mobile, Petro-Chemical, and Textile Industries) from pre-independence to the present, which is the reason the rural migrants are more eager to attract more in these areas Bhagat and Mohanty (2009), Munda and Nagdeve (2022), Parida (2019). In contrast, Chennai UA and Bangalore UA received more urban origin migrant population than the other UA areas. This is the reason for the diverse job market, higher wages for labour, knowledge-based economy, cosmopolitan environment, and industry-friendly policies. All these factors were attracting skilled labour migration in these two cities, and most of the time, skilled labour is migrating from small towns and cities in India Chandrasekhar and Sharma (2015), Dowall and Monkkonen (2008), Iyer et al. (2007), Sridhar et al. (2013). However, Chennai UA illustrates a higher proportion of intra-state migration, this is because of proximity to the other rural and urban areas within Tamil Nadu, economic dependency of surrounding regions, cultural and linguistic comfort, and traditional pattern of migration in Chennai Dowall and Monkkonen (2008), Shekhar and Shekhar (2021), Sujatha et al. (2014). At the same time, Delhi UA stagger of migrants is inter-state. This is because of the status of the national capital, a major economic hub, and a center for education and governance Mathur (2021), Rana and Singh (2024), Singh and Debadhikary (2021). In terms of migration duration, Kolkata UA receives the highest number of long-term migrants than the rest of the UAs in India. This is because Kolkata UA has colonial importance, affordable cost of living, stable employment opportunities, and intergenerational migration. Another important reason is that after independence, Kolkata became a key center for refugees, especially from East Bengal (Now Bangladesh). Many of the migrants are settled permanently and contribute to a significant long-term migrant population Datta (2004), Roy et al. (2022), Shamshad (2017), Sreya (2022). The reason for migration is illustrated in two important sections: in the urban agglomerations of Delhi, Bangalore, and Mumbai, there are more migrants in the Work/Employment section. These three UAs are known as economic powerhouses in India, having informal sector opportunities and maintaining aspirational living standards for all Benjamin (2007), Chatterjee et al. (2020), Joseph (2006),

Lambregts et al. (2018). In contrast, urban agglomerations like Chennai and Bangalore attract migrants for education. The world recognized that southern India is more developed than the rest of India in terms of economy and education. All these depend on the educational infrastructure of southern India, where Chennai and Bangalore play an important. Educational institutions like IIT, Madras, IISC, Bangalore, and Indian Institute of Management Bangalore and their research and innovation ecosystem are attracting the major students of the country Fuller and Narasimhan (2007), Parthasarathy (2004), Sundari and Mano (2020), Van Dijk (2003). While certain urban agglomerations attract migrants from across the country, others primarily receive migration from nearby states. This reflects a clear regional divide: major industrial and capital cities such as Delhi and Mumbai function as national magnets, whereas port cities and southern metros like Chennai and Kolkata tend to draw migrants from their immediate surroundings Rode et al. (2008), Tumbe (2018). This pattern underscores the spatial hierarchy and regional differentiation within India's internal migration landscape.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study developed into the migration dynamic in contrast to urban growth in major urban agglomerations in India. The research revealed that economic globalization and urban economic growth through the information and communication technology (ICT) sector after 1991 play a significant role in major urban development in India. Meanwhile, side-by-side migration contributes a major helping hand to the development of urban agglomeration in different cities in India. The study outcome revealed that urban agglomeration like Delhi and Bangalore contributes to the trends of the fastest-growing cities in India, while Kolkata experienced the lowest growth from 1991 to 2011. Despite the development of urban agglomeration in India since independence, the government should take specific measures for proper urban growth, as it lags behind cities like Kolkata and adds some new cities for future development purposes. In the case of migration after the 1983 Emigration Act, the government did not properly develop a migration policy for the migrant population, so in India, migrant policy is important, as to the urban agglomeration policy, for the proper development in both sectors.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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