

RURAL-URBAN NEXUS POLICY AND URBAN POVERTY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INDIA AND CHINA

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According to Census 2001, India's population was 1048.6 million and China's population was 1280.4 million, which were 2nd and 1st among the countries of the world, respectively. Approximately India has about one-third land under cultivation when China has only one-tenth. Due to absence of urban amenities and employment opportunities in Indian villages and small and medium towns, working age population flocked directly towards large cities in search of better employment opportunities and better living conditions. The rural migrants surpassed the small and medium towns and directly landed in large metropolitan cities and made an addition to slum areas and its population. In Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai metropolitan cities, more than 40 per cent population lives in slum areas. In northern India, in Delhi, Lucknow and other metropolitan cities at least 30 per cent population is huddled in slum areas. During 1991 and 2001 census the number of towns and cities¹ grew from 4515 to 5161 in which about 27.8 per cent country's population (2001) was living. The overall decadal growth of number of towns/cities continued between 10 to 15 per cent. In India the million plus cities, which were 9 in 1971, grew to 12 in 1981 to 23 in 1991 and to 35 in 2001. This growth rate of million plus cities was 33.3 per cent in 1971-81, 91.7 per cent in 1981-91 and 52.2 per cent in 1991-2001. If these million plus cities were growing in countryside, where urbanization is low, they could have worked as so-called engine of growth. For example, the decadal growth of urban population in Delhi is about 46 per cent, Kanpur 36 per cent, Lucknow 35 per cent, which is much higher than the urban population growth in small and medium towns of the country as a whole. In New York the decadal growth rate is only 9 per cent, as in USA the economic condition and urban amenities are everywhere balanced, people need not to migrate far from less privileged to affluent areas like in India.

Because of Chinese government's initial focus on small and medium towns and then FDIs adopting them for new enterprises has attracted the population, and urban population did not concentrate in mega cities, when reverse happened in India. Though one child norm at present is not strictly imposed by the Chinese government, but due to fast economic development and urbanization, the natural growth rate of population is constantly decreasing to a point of worry. In China in 1991 the natural growth rate of population was 1.30 per cent, which dropped to 0.70 per cent in 2001 and further dropped to 0.59 per cent in 2004. In Beijing and Shanghai metropolitan cities the natural growth rate of population was as low as 0.07 per cent and nil respectively. In Beijing and Shanghai metropolitan cities the sex ratio was recorded quite high as 952 and 1035 respectively, which shows the comparatively favourable conditions for female folk. The literacy rate in China during 1980 was 77.2 per cent which rose to 84.1 per cent in 1991 and to 93.3 per cent in 2001. In Beijing and Shanghai the literacy rate was hundred per cent. Currently almost entire, i.e. 200 million children are attending their primary and secondary schools in China and about 98.0 per cent of school-age girls are enrolled. In view of foreign trade, at school level one foreign language is compulsory and English is most popular. Though India and China are comparable in term of size of

population, but yet India is far behind in all aspects of development. In India rural-urban policy is not spelled properly, except various developmental programmes are implemented in isolation in rural and urban areas, which are inadequate and inconsistent. Our small and medium towns or even lakh plus cities are merely residential, administrative or retail trade centres bereft of security and urban infrastructure. In million plus cities, there is no restriction of locating further enterprises which are not even serving the local population. If these enterprises were located in small size cities/towns, then migrants could have avoided to pour into million plus cities, where water scarcity, slum, pollution and crime are the main features. More than one-third population in all million plus cities live in slums. China was able to make small urban centres viable for attracting investments in new industries and rural surplus labourers to work and settle instead of migrating to already grown up cities and making mess. Small towns and cities can become the engine of growth at regional level, when they are made creative and where 24 hours power and infrastructure are assured.